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66

WORKS

OF THE LATE

REV. JAMES HAMILTON, D.D. F.L.S.

IN SIX VOLUMES.

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G Anderson Miller

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LIFE IN EARNEST.

DEDICATION

TO THE

KIRK-SESSION AND CONGREGATION OF THE NATIONAL SCOTCH CHURCH, REGENT SQUARE.

My dear Friends,—In the absence of sufficient personal intercourse, I felt desirous of sending to your several homes a word in season at the opening of this year; and, as an appropriate remembrancer at such a time, I have selected the following familiar Lectures. In printing them I thought it best to retain the homely style in which you first made their acquaintance a few Sabbaths ago.[1] Should others not like such plainness of speech, I can at least calculate on your toleration.

And here, my friends, were it not the restraining thought that colder eyes than yours may look upon these pages, there are many things I would like to say. I would like to commemorate some of the mercies which have crowned the three years and a half during which we have worshipped together; and I would like to give you some idea of my own affection for you. To the elders for counsel never asked nor adopted in vain—to both elders and deacons for days and portions of the night devoted to labours of love, which but for their painstaking could never have been accomplished—to the self-denying teachers of the Sabbath-school and of the week-evening

[1] They were delivered as part of a Course of Lectures on the Romans, on the morning and evening of Sabbaths, Nov. 17 and 24, and Dec. 1, 1844.

class—and to all who have contributed their willing aid in various schemes of usefulness—I would tender a pastor's warmest gratitude. And I would like to mention with thanksgiving to God two things which have made my own heart often glad—the harmony of our Church, and the happiness of your abodes. Seldom does a day transpire without seeing as much in-door comfort and tranquillity —as much mutual affection of heads of families, and parents and children, and brothers and sisters—with so evident an aspect of God's blessing on many homes, as are an unspeakable delight to me. Does not God's goodness in this respect often strike yourselves, and make you sing the twenty-third psalm?

"My table thou hast furnished
In presence of my foes;
My head thou dost with oil anoint,
And my cup overflows.

"Goodness and mercy all my life
Shall surely follow me;
And in God's house for evermore
My dwelling-place shall be."

And, in some measure the result of domestic piety and peace, I here record with gratitude our congregational harmony. Sure enough we have hitherto dwelt together in unity; and as I can truly say for my brethren, your office-bearers, that our anxiety is your edification, so has your "order" been our "joy."

But whilst the acknowledgment of God's goodness is the delightful employment of a closing year, it is no less incumbent, with an opening year, to consider what more we can do for the God of our mercies in the days to come. As a Church, we have congregational duties, and each member of the Church has personal duties. Let your minister remind you of some of these.

1. Let this new year be a year of greater *activity*. Be

diligent in your proper callings, in seeking personal improvement, and in doing good. Ply your daily employments in a Christian spirit, doing nothing by constraint or grudgingly, but adorning the doctrine of God your Saviour by your patient, sprightly, and thorough-going industry. Seek personal improvement. Give yourselves to the reading of instructive and religious books; and when friends meet let them strive to give the conversation a profitable turn, and one which may minister to the use of edifying. The Young Men's Society is an incentive to study and an outlet for the results of reading; and those young men who are desirous of mutual improvement should all be members of it. Engage in some direct effort to do good. Seek to leave the world the better for your sojourn in it. Whatever you attempt, endeavour to do it so thoroughly, and follow it up so resolutely, that the result shall be ascertained and evident. And in your attempts at usefulness, be not only conscientious but enthusiastic. Love the work. Redeem the time. Remember that the Lord is at hand.

2. Let this new year be a year of greater *liberality.* There are some objects to which of late you have given very largely; and there are those amongst you who give to every object freely, and with a self-denying generosity. But by a little systematic forethought and contrivance, begun now and carried through the year, many might double their contributions without at all abridging their real enjoyments. The maxim, "I can do without it," if all Regent Square acted on it for a single year, might build a school or send out a missionary. If all the money which your children spend on cakes and toys, and which we grown-up people spend on playthings and parties, were put into the Lord's treasury, we should have as much as we wanted for all our congregational

purposes, and a great deal over to help our neighbours. And whilst some are striving how much they can *do*, let others strive how much they can *give* to the cause of Christ this year. Those who excel in the one are likely to excel in the other: for just as those who have too little faith to give, have usually too little fervour to work; so the hardest workers are usually the largest givers.

3. Let this be a year of greater *spirituality*. As the holy Joseph Alleine wrote from Ilchester prison to his flock at Taunton, "Beloved Christians, live like yourselves; let the world see that the promises of God, and privileges of the gospel, are not empty sounds, or a mere crack. Let the heavenly cheerfulness, and the restless diligence, and the holy raisedness of your conversations, prove the reality, and excellency, and beauty of your religion to the world." Aim at an elevated life. Seek to live so near to God that you shall not be overwhelmed by those amazing sorrows which you may soon encounter, nor surprised by that decease which may come upon you in a moment, suddenly. Let prayer never be a form. Always realize it as an approach to the living God for some specific purpose; and learn to watch for the returns of prayer. Let the Word of God dwell in you richly. That sleep will be sweet and that awaking hallowed, where a text of Scripture, or a stanza of a spiritual song, imbues the last thoughts of consciousness. See that you make progress. See that when the year is closing, you have not all the evil tempers and infirmities of character which presently afflict you; but see to it that, if permitted to set up the Ebenezer of another closing year, you may be able to look back on radiant spots where you enjoyed seasons of spiritual refreshing and victories over enemies heretofore too strong for you. Happy new

year! if its path should prove so bright and its progress so vivid, that in a future retrospect your eye could fix on many a Bethel and Peniel along its track, and your grateful memory could say, "Yonder is the grave where I buried a long besetting sin, and that stone of memorial marks where God made me to triumph over a fierce temptation through Jesus Christ. Yonder Sabbath was the top of the hill where I clasped the cross and the burden fell off my back; and that communion was the land of Beulah, where I saw the far-off land and the King in his beauty."

My dear friends, it is a blessed thing to know the Saviour, to feel that your soul is safe. You have been in a ship when it entered the harbour, and you have noticed the different looks of the passengers as they turned their eyes ashore. There was one who, that he might not lose a moment's time, had got everything ready for landing long ago; and now he smiles and beckons to yonder party on the pier, who, in their turn, are so eager to meet him that they almost press over the margin of the quay; and no sooner is the gangway thrown across than he has hold of the arm of one, and another is triumphant on his shoulder, and all the rest are leaping before and after him on their homeward way. But there was another, who showed no alacrity. He gazed with pensive eye on the nearer coast, and seemed to grudge that the trip was over. He was a stranger, going amongst strangers; and though sometimes during the voyage he had a momentary hope that something unexpected might occur, and that some friendly face might recognise him in regions where he was going an alien and an adventurer; no such welcoming face is there, and with reluctant steps he quits the vessel, and commits himself to the unknown country. And now that

every one else has disembarked, who is this unhappy man whom they have brought on deck, and whom, groaning in his heavy chains, they are conducting to the dreaded shore? Alas! he is a felon and a runaway, whom they are bringing back to take his trial there; and no wonder he is loath to land.

Now, dear brethren, our ship is sailing fast. We shall soon hear the rasping on the shallows, and the commotion overhead, which bespeak the port in view. When it comes to that, how shall you feel? Are you a stranger, or a convict, or are you going home? Can you say, "I know whom I have believed?" Have you a Friend within the veil? And however much you may enjoy the voyage, and however much you may like your fellow-passengers, does your heart sometimes leap up at the prospect of seeing Jesus as He is, and so being ever with the Lord?

The Lord send you a happy, a holy, and a useful year! Accept this little token of your pastor's wish to help your faith and joy; and believe me

Your ever-affectionate Minister,

JAMES HAMILTON.

January 1, 1845.

LECTURE I.

INDUSTRY.

"Not slothful in business."—Rom. xii. 11.

Two things are very certain,—that we have all got a work to do, and are all, more or less, indisposed to do it: in other words, every man has a calling, and most men have a greater or less amount of indolence, which disinclines them for the work of that calling. Many men would have liked the gospel all the better if it had entirely repealed the sentence, "In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat thy bread,"—had it proclaimed a final emancipation from industry, and turned our world into a merry playground or luxurious dormitory. But this is not what the gospel does. It does not abolish labour; it gives it a new and a nobler aspect. The gospel abolishes labour much in the same way as it has abolished death; it leaves the thing, but changes its nature. The gospel sweetens the believer's work: it gives him new motives for performing it. The gospel dignifies toil; it transforms it from the drudgery of the workhouse or the penitentiary to the affectionate offices and joyful services of the fireside and the family circle. It asks us to do for the sake of Christ many things which we were once compelled to

bear as a portion of the curse, and which worldly men perform for selfish and secondary reasons. "Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus. Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord. Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing unto the Lord. Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing God; and whatsoever ye do, do it heartily as to the Lord and not unto men, knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance, for ye serve the Lord Christ." The gospel has not superseded diligence. "Study to be quiet and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you. If any man will not work, neither let him eat." It is mentioned as almost the climax of sin, "And withal they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also, and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not;" as, on the other hand, the healthy and right-conditioned state of a soul is, "Not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord."

I. This precept is violated by those who have no business at all. By the bounty of God's providence, some are in such a situation that they do not need to toil for a subsistence; they go to bed when they please, and get up when they can sleep no longer, and they do with themselves whatever they like; and though we dare not say that theirs is the happiest life, it certainly is the easiest.

But it will neither be a lawful life nor a happy one unless it have some work in hand, some end in view. Those of you who are familiar with the shore, may have seen attached to the inundated reef a creature, whether a plant or animal you could scarcely tell, rooted to the rock as a plant might be, and twirling its long tentacles as an animal would do. This plant-animal's life is somewhat monotonous, for it has nothing to do but grow and twirl its feelers, floating in the tide, or folding itself upon its foot-stalk when that tide has receded, for months and years together. Now, would it not be very dismal to be transformed into a zoophyte? Would it not be an awful punishment, with your human soul still in you, to be anchored to a rock, able to do nothing but spin about your arms or fold them up again, and knowing no variety except when the receding ocean left you in the daylight, or the returning waters plunged you into the green depths again, or the sweeping tide brought you the prize of a young periwinkle or an invisible star-fish? But what better is the life you are spontaneously leading? What greater variety marks your existence than chequers the life of the sea-anemone? Does not one day float over you after another, just as the tide floats over it, and find you much the same, and leave you vegetating still? Are you more useful? What real service to others did you render yesterday? What tangible amount of occupation did you overtake in the one hundred and sixty-eight hours of which last week consisted? And what higher end in living have you than that polypus? You go through certain mechanical routines of rising, and dress-

ing, and visiting, and dining, and going to sleep again; and are a little roused from your usual lethargy by the arrival of a friend, or the effort needed to write some note of ceremony. But as it curtseys in the waves, and vibrates its exploring arms, and gorges some dainty medusa, the sea-anemone goes through nearly the same round of pursuits and enjoyments with your intelligent and immortal self. Is this a life for a rational and responsible creature to lead?

II. But this precept is also violated by those who are diligent in trifles,—whose activity is a busy idleness. You may be very earnest in a pursuit which is utterly beneath your prerogative as an intelligent creature, and your high destination as an immortal being. Pursuits which are perfectly proper in creatures destitute of reason, may be very culpable in those who not only have reason, but are capable of enjoyments above the range of reason itself. We this instant imagined a man retaining all his consciousness transformed into a zoophyte. Let us imagine another similar transformation; fancy that, instead of a polypus, you were changed into a swallow. There you have a creature abundantly busy, up in the early morning, for ever on the wing, as graceful and sprightly in his flight as he is tasteful in the haunts which he selects. Look at him zigzagging over the clover field, skimming the limpid lake, whisking round the steeple, or dancing gaily in the sky. Behold him in high spirits, shrieking out his ecstasy as he has bolted a dragon-fly, or darted through the arrow-slits of the old

turret, or performed some other feat of hirundine agility. And notice how he pays his morning visits, alighting elegantly on some house-top, and twittering politely by turns to the swallow on either side of him, and after five minutes' conversation, off and away to call for his friend at the castle. And now he has gone upon his travels, gone to spend the winter at Rome or Naples, to visit Egypt or the Holy Land, or perform some more *recherché* pilgrimage to Spain or the coast of Barbary. And when he comes home next April, sure enough he has been abroad;—charming climate—highly delighted with the cicadas in Italy, and the bees on Hymettus;—locusts in Africa rather scarce this season; but upon the whole much pleased with his trip, and returned in high health and spirits. Now, dear friends, this is a very proper life for a bird of the air, but is it a life for you? To flit about from house to house; to pay futile visits, where, if the talk were written down, it would amount to little more than the chattering of a swallow; to bestow all your thoughts on graceful attitudes and nimble movements and polished attire; to roam from land to land with so little information in your head, or so little taste for the sublime or beautiful in your soul, that, could a swallow publish his travels, and did you publish yours, we should probably find the one a counterpart of the other; the winged traveller enlarging on the discomforts of his nest, and the wingless one on the miseries of his hotel or his chateau; you describing the places of amusement, or enlarging on the vastness of the country and the abundance of the game, and your rival eloquent on the self-same

things. Oh! it is a thought, not ridiculous, but appalling. If the earthly history of some of our brethren were written down; if a faithful record were kept of the way they spend their time; if all the hours of idle vacancy or idler occupancy were put together, and the very small amount of useful diligence deducted, the life of a beast of the field or a fowl of the firmament would be a truer one—more worthy of its powers and more equal to its Creator's end in forming it. Such a register is kept. Though the trifler does not chronicle his own vain words and wasted hours, they chronicle themselves. They find their indelible place in that book of remembrance with which human hand cannot tamper, and from which no erasure save one can blot them out. They are noted in the memory of God. And when once this life of wondrous opportunities and awful advantages is over—when the twenty or fifty years of probation are fled away—when mortal existence, with its facilities for personal improvement and serviceableness to others, is gone beyond recall—when the trifler looks back to the long pilgrimage, with all the doors of hope and doors of usefulness past which he skipped in his frisky forgetfulness—what anguish will it move to think that he has gambolled through such a world without salvation to himself, without any real benefit to his brethren, a busy trifler, a vivacious idler, a clever fool!

III. Those violate this precept who have a lawful calling, a proper business, but are slothful in it. When people are in business for themselves, they are in less risk of

transgressing this injunction ; though even there it sometimes happens that the hand is not diligent enough to make its owner rich. But it is when engaged in business, not for ourselves, but for others, or for God, that we are in greatest danger of neglecting this rule. The servant who has no pleasure in his work, who does no more than wages can buy or a legal agreement enforce ; the shopman who does not enter zealously into his employer's interest, and bestir himself to extend *his* trade as he would strive were the concern his own ; the scholar who trifles when his teacher's eye is elsewhere, and who is content if he can only learn enough to escape disgrace ; the teacher who is satisfied if he can only convey a decent quantum of instruction, and who does not labour for the mental expansion and spiritual well-being of his pupils, as he would for those of his own children ; the magistrate or civic functionary who is only careful to escape public censure, and who does not labour to make the community richer, or happier, or better for his administration ; the minister who can give his energies to another cause than the cause of Christ, and neglect his Master's business in minding his own ; every one, in short, who performs the work which God or his brethren have given him to do in a hireling and perfunctory manner, is a violator of the Divine injunction, " Not slothful in business." There are some persons of a dull and languid turn. They trail sluggishly through life, as if some painful viscus, some adhesive slime were clogging every movement, and making their snail-path a waste of their very substance. They do nothing with that healthy alacrity, that gleesome energy which bespeaks a

sound mind even more than a vigorous body; but they drag themselves to the inevitable task with remonstrating reluctance, as if every joint were set in a socket of torture, or as if they expected the quick flesh to cleave to the next implement of industry they handled. Having no wholesome love of work, no joyous delight in duty, they do everything grudgingly, in the most superficial manner, and at the latest moment. Others there are, who, if you find them at their post, you will find them dozing at it. They are a sort of perpetual somnambulists, walking through their sleep; moving in a constant mystery; looking for their faculties, and forgetting what they are looking for; not able to find their work, and when they have found their work not able to find their hands; doing everything dreamily, and therefore everything confusedly and incompletely; their work a dream, their sleep a dream, not repose, not refreshment, but a slumberous vision of rest, a dreamy query concerning sleep; too late for everything, taking their passage when the ship has sailed, insuring their property when the house is burned, locking the door when the goods are stolen—men whose bodies seem to have started in the race of existence before their minds were ready, and who are always gazing out vacantly as if they expected their wits were coming up by the next arrival. But, besides the sloths and the somnambulists, there is a third class—the day-dreamers. These are a very mournful, because a self-deceiving generation. Like a man who has his windows glazed with yellow glass, and who can fancy a golden sunshine or a mellow autumn on the fields, even when a wintry sleet is sweeping over them,

the day-dreamer lives in an elysium of his own creating. With a foot on either side of the fire—with his chin on his bosom, and the wrong end of the book turned towards him, he can pursue his self-complacent musings till he imagines himself a traveller in unknown lands—the explorer of Central Africa—the solver of all the unsolved problems in science—the author of some unprecedented poem at which the wide world is wondering—or something so stupendous that he even begins to quail at his own glory. The misery is, that whilst nothing is done towards attaining the greatness, his luxurious imagination takes its possession for granted, and with his feet on the fender, he fancies himself already on the highest pinnacle of fame; and a still greater misery is, that the time thus wasted in unprofitable musings, if spent in honest application and downright working, would go very far to carry him where his sublime imagination fain would be.[1] To avoid this guilt and wretchedness,—

1. Have a business in which diligence is lawful and desirable. There are some pursuits which do not deserve to be called a business. Æropus was the king of Macedonia, and it was his favourite pursuit to make lanterns.[2] Probably, he was very good at making them; but his proper business was to be a king, and therefore the more lanterns he made, the worse king he was. And if your work be a high calling, you must not dissipate your energies on

[1] See Note A.

[2] Quoted in Todd's *Students' Guide* (chap. v.)—a book which no zealous student will read without being animated by its vigorous tone, and instructed by its wise and practical suggestions.

trifles, on things which, lawful in themselves, are still as irrelevant to you as lamp-making is irrelevant to a king. Perhaps some here are without any specific calling. They have neither a farm nor a merchandise to look after. They have no household to care for, no children to train and educate, no official duties to engross their time; they have an independent fortune and live at large. My friends, I congratulate you on your wealth, your liberal education, your position in society, and your abundant leisure. It is in your power to be the benefactors of your generation; you are in circumstances to do an eminent service for God, and finish some great work before your going hence. What that work shall be I do not attempt to indicate; I rather leave it for your own investigation and discovery. Every one has his own line of things. Howard chose one path, and Wilberforce another; Harlan Page chose one, and Brainerd Taylor another. Mrs. Fletcher did one work, Lady Glenorchy another, and Mary Jane Graham a third. Every one did the work for which God had best fitted them, but each made that work their *business*. They gave themselves to it; they not only did it by the by, but they selected it and set themselves in earnest to it, not parenthetically, but on very purpose—the problem of their lives—for Christ's sake and in Christ's service, and held themselves as bound to do it as if they had been by Himself expressly engaged for it. And, brethren, you must do the same. Those of you who do not need to toil for your daily bread, your very leisure is a hint what the Lord would have you to do. As you have no business of your

own, He would have you devote yourselves to *His* business. He would have you carry on, in some of its manifold departments, that work which He came to earth to do. He would have you go about His Father's business, as He was wont to be about it. And if you still persist in living to yourselves, you cannot be happy. You cannot spend all your days in making pin-cushions, or reading newspapers, or loitering in club-rooms and coffee-houses, and yet be happy. If you profess to follow Christ, this is not a Christian life. It is not a conscientious, and so it cannot be a comfortable life. And if the pin-cushion or the newspaper fail to make you happy, remember the reason: very good as relaxations, ever so great an amount of these things can never be a *business*, and "wist ye not that you should be about your Father's business?"

2. Having made a wise and deliberate selection of a business, go on with it, go through with it. Persevering mediocrity is much more respectable and unspeakably more useful than talented inconstancy. In the heathery turf you will often find a plant chiefly remarkable for its peculiar roots; from the main stem down to the minutest fibre, you will find them all abruptly terminate, as if shorn or bitten off, and the quaint superstition of the country-people alleges, that once on a time it was a plant of singular potency for healing all sorts of maladies, and therefore the great enemy of man in his malignity bit off the roots, in which its virtues resided. This plant, with this odd history, is a very good emblem of many well-meaning but little-effecting people. They might be defined as

radicibus præmorsis, or rather *inceptis succisis*. The efficacy of every good work lies in its completion, and all their good works terminate abruptly, and are left off unfinished. The devil frustrates their efficacy by cutting off their ends; their unprofitable history is made up of plans and projects, schemes of usefulness that were never gone about, and magnificent undertakings that were never carried forward; societies that were set agoing, then left to shift for themselves, and forlorn beings who for a time were taken up and instructed, and just when they were beginning to show symptoms of improvement, were cast on the world again. But others there are, who, before beginning to build, count the cost, and having collected their materials, and laid their foundations deep and broad, go on to rear their structure, indifferent to more tempting schemes and sublimer enterprises subsequently suggested. The man who provides a home for a poor neighbour is a greater benefactor of the poor than he who lays the foundation of a stately almshouse, and never finishes a single apartment. The persevering teacher who guides one child into the saving knowledge of Christ and leads him on to established habits of piety, is a more useful man than his friend who gathers in a roomful of ragged children, and after a few weeks of waning zeal, turns them all adrift on the streets again. The patriot who set his heart on abolishing the slave-trade, and after twenty years of rebuffs and revilings, of tantalized hope and disappointed effort, at last succeeded, achieved a greater work than if he had set afloat all possible schemes of philanthropy, and then left them, one

after the other, to sink or swim. So short is life, that we can afford to lose none of it in abortive undertakings; and once we are assured that a given work is one which it is worth our while to do, it is true wisdom to set about it instantly, and once we have begun, it is true economy to finish it.

LECTURE II.

INDUSTRY.

"Not slothful in business."—Rom. xii. 11.

This morning we saw how this precept is violated by various descriptions of persons; by those who have no business at all, and those whose business is only an active idleness; and finally, by those who, having a lawful business, a good and honourable work assigned them, do it reluctantly or drowsily, or leave it altogether undone.

There are some who have no business at all. They are of no use in the world. They are doing no good and attempting none; and when they are taken out of the world, their removal creates no vacancy. When an oak or any noble and useful tree is uprooted, his removal creates a blank. For years after, when you look to the place which once knew him, you see that something is missing. The branches of adjacent trees have not yet supplied the void. They still hesitate to occupy the place formerly filled by their powerful neighbour; and there is still a deep chasm in the ground—a rugged pit, which shows how far his giant roots once spread. But when a leafless pole, a wooden pin is plucked up, it comes clean and easily away. There is no rending of the turf, no marring of the

landscape, no vacuity created, no regret. It leaves no memento, and is never missed. Now, brethren, what are you? Are you cedars, planted in the house of the Lord, casting a cool and grateful shadow on those around you? Are you palm-trees, fat and flourishing, yielding bounteous fruit, and making all who know you bless you? Are you so useful, that were you once away, it would not be easy to fill your place again, but people, as they point to the void in the plantation—the pit in the ground—would say, "It was here that that brave cedar grew; it was here that that old palm-tree diffused his familiar shadow and showered his mellow clusters?" Or are you a peg—a pin—a rootless, branchless, fruitless thing, that may be pulled up any day, and no one ever care to ask what has become of it? What are you doing? What are you contributing to the world's happiness. or the Church's glory? What is your *business?*

Individuals there are who are doing something, though it would be difficult to specify what. They are busy; but it is a busy idleness:—

> "Their only labour is to kill the time,
> And labour dire it is, and weary woe.
> They sit, they loll, turn o'er some idle rhyme,
> Or saunter forth, with tottering steps and slow.
> This soon too rude an exercise they find—
> Straight on the couch their limbs again they throw,
> Where hours on hours they sighing lie reclined,
> And court the vapoury god soft-breathing in the wind."[1]

They think that they are busy, though their chief business be to get quit of themselves. To annihilate time, to quiet

[1] *Castle of Indolence.*

conscience, to banish care, to keep ennui out at one door, and serious thoughts out at the other, are their hardest occupation. And betwixt their fluttering visits and frivolous engagements, their midnight diversions, their haggard mornings, and shortened days, their yawning attempts at reading, and sulky application to matters of business which they cannot well evade; betwixt mobs of callers and shoals of ceremonious notes, they fuss and fret themselves into the pleasant belief that they are the most worried and overdriven of mortal men. It is possible to be very busy, and yet very idle. It is possible to be serious about trifles, and to exhaust one's energies in doing nothing. It is possible to be toiling all one's days in doing that which, in the infatuation of fashion or the delirium of ambition, will look exceedingly august and important, but which the first flash of eternity will transmute into shame and everlasting contempt.

Then, among those who have really got a work to do, whose calling is lawful or something more, perhaps a direct vocation in the service of God, there are three classes who violate the precept of the text—those who do their work grudgingly, or drowsily, or not at all—the sloths, the somnambulists, and the day-dreamers. Some do it grudgingly. They have not a heart for work; and of all work, least heart for that which God has given them. Instead of that angelic alacrity which speeds instinctively on the service God assigns,—that healthy love of labour which a loyal and well-conditioned soul would exhibit,—they postpone everything to the latest moment, and then go whimpering and growling to the

hated task as if they were about to undergo some dismal punishment. They have a strange idea of occupation. They look on it as a drug, a penalty, a goblin, a fiend, something very fierce and cruel, something very nauseous; and they would gladly smuggle through existence by one of those side paths which the grim giants, labour and industry, do not guard.

Others again, who do not quite refuse their work, put only half a soul into it. They have no zeal for their profession. They somehow scramble through it; but it is without any noble enthusiasm, any appetite for work, or any love to the God who gives it. If they are intrusted with the property of others, they cannot boast as Jacob: "In the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night; and my sleep departed from mine eyes. God hath seen mine affliction and the labour of mine hands." If intrusted with the souls of others, they cannot reckon up "the abundant labours, the often journeyings, the weariness and painfulness, the watchings, the hunger and thirst," the perils and privations which, for the love of his Master and his Master's work, the apostle of the Gentiles joyfully encountered. If scholars, they are content to learn the lesson, so that no fault shall be found. If servants, they aspire to nothing more than fulfilling their inevitable toils. And if occupying official stations, they are satisfied with a decent discharge of customary duties, and are glad if they leave things no worse than they found them. They are hireling, perfunctory, heartless, in all they do. Their work is so sleepily done that it is enough to make you lethargic to labour in their

company; and, before they go zealously and wakefully to work, they would need to be startled up into the daylight of actual existence—they would need to be shaken from that torpor into which the very sight of labour is apt to entrance them. Oh, happier far to lose health and life itself in clear, brisk, conscious working—to spend the last atom of strength, and yield the vital spark itself in joyful, wakeful efforts for Him who did all for us—than to drawl through a dreaming life, with all the fatigue of labour and nothing of its sweetness; snoring in a constant lethargy; sleeping while you work, and night-mared with labour when you really sleep.

And, besides the procrastinating and perfunctory class, those are "slothful in business" who do no business at all. And there are such persons—agreeable, self-complacent, plausible persons—who really fancy that they have done a great deal because they have intended to do so much. Their life is made up of good purposes, splendid projects, and heroic resolutions. They live in the region which the poet has described:—

> "A pleasing land of drowsy-head it was,
> Of dreams that wave before the half-shut eye,
> And of gay castles in the clouds that pass,
> For ever flushing round a summer's day."

They have performed so many journeys, and made so many discoveries, and won so many laurels in this aërial clime, that life is over, and they find their real work is not begun. Like the dreamer who is getting great sums of money in his sleep, and who when he awakes opens his till or his pocket-book almost expecting to find it

full, the day-dreamer, the projector awaking up at the close of life, can hardly believe that after his bright and glorious visions, he is leaving the world no wiser, mankind no richer, and his own home no happier for all the golden prospects which have flitted through his busy brain. What a blessed world it were, how happy and how rich, if all the idlers were working, if all the workers were awake, and if all the projectors were practical men!

I trust, my friends, that many among you are desirous to be active Christians. Perhaps the following hints may be helpful to those who wish to serve the Lord by diligence in business:—

1. Have a CALLING in which it is worth while to be busy. There are many callings in which it is lawful for the Christian to "abide." He may be a lawyer like Sir Matthew Hale, or a physician like Haller, Heberden, and Mason Good. He may be a painter like West, or a sculptor like Bacon, or a poet like Milton and Klopstock and Cowper. He may be a trader like Thornton and the Hardcastles, or a philosopher like Boyle and Boerhaave. He may be a hard-working artisan like the Yorkshire Blacksmith and the Watchmaker of Geneva; or he may toil for his daily bread like the Happy Waterman, and the Wallsend Miner, and the Shepherd of Salisbury Plain, and many a domestic servant of humble but pious memory. And the business of this ordinary calling the disciple of Christ must discharge heartily, and with all his might. He must labour to be eminent and exemplary in his own profession. He should seek, for the sake of the gospel, to be *first-rate* in his own department. But

over and above his ordinary calling as a member of society, the believer has his special calling as a member of the Church. He has a direct work to do in his Saviour's service. Some who now hear me have so much of their time at their own disposal, that they might almost make their calling as members of Christ's Church the business of their lives. And each who is in this privileged situation should consider what is the particular line of things for which his taste and talents most urgently predispose him, and for which his training and station best adapt him. The healthiest condition of the Church is where there is a member for every office, and where every member fulfils his own office;[1] where there are no defects and no transpositions, but each is allowed to ply to the utmost the work for which God has intended him; where Newton writes his Letters, and Butler his Analogy; where, in the leisure of the olden ministry, Matthew Henry compiles his Commentary, and where, in the calm retreat of Olney, Cowper pours forth his devotional melodies; where Venn cultivates his corner of the vineyard, and Whitefield ranges over the field of the world; where President Edwards is locked up in his study, and Wilberforce is the joy of the drawing-room; where the adventurous Carey goes down into the pit, and the sturdy arm of Fuller deals out the rope; where he who ministers waits on his ministering, and he that teacheth on teaching, and he that exhorteth on exhortation, and he who has wealth gives liberally, and he who has method and good management rules diligently, and he who can pay visits

[1] Rom. xii. 3-8.

of mercy pays them cheerfully. And if the Lord has given you an abundance of unoccupied leisure, He has along with it given you some talent or other, and says, "Occupy till I come." Find out what it is that you best can do, or what it is which, if you neglect it, is likely to be left undone. And whether you select as your sphere of Christian usefulness, a Sabbath class or a ragged school, a local prayer-meeting or a district for domiciliary visitation—whether you devote yourself to the interests of some evangelistic society, or labour secretly from house to house,—whatever line of things you select, make it your "business." Pursue it so earnestly, that though it were only in that one field of activity, you would evince yourself no common Christian.

2. Make the most of TIME. Some have little leisure, but there are sundry expedients, any one of which, if fairly tried, would make that little leisure longer.

(1.) *Economy.*—Most of the men who have died enormously rich, acquired their wealth, not in huge windfalls, but by minute and careful accumulations. It was not one vast sum bequeathed to them after another, which overwhelmed them with inevitable opulence; but it was the loose money which most men would lavish away, the little sums which many would not deem worth looking after, the pennies and half-crowns of which you would keep no reckoning,—these are the items which, year by year piled up, have reared their pyramid of fortune. From these money-makers let us learn the nobler "avarice of time." One of the longest and most elaborate poems of recent times, was composed in the streets of

London by a physician in busy practice, during the brief snatches of time when passing from one patient's door to another.[1] And in order to achieve some good work which you have much at heart, you may not be able to secure an entire week, or even an uninterrupted day. But try what you can make of the broken fragments of time. Glean up its golden dust; those raspings and parings of precious duration, those leavings of days and remnants of hours which so many sweep out into the waste of existence. And thus, if you be a miser of moments, if you be frugal and hoard up odd minutes and half-hours and unexpected holidays, your careful gleanings may eke out a long and useful life, and you may die at last richer in existence than multitudes whose time is all their own. The time which some men waste in superfluous slumber and idle visits and desultory application, were it all redeemed, would give them wealth of leisure, and enable them to execute undertakings for which they deem a less worried life than theirs essential. When a person says, "I have no time to pray, no time to read the Bible, no time to improve my mind or do a kind turn to a neighbour," he may be saying what he thinks, but he should not think what he says; for if he has not got the time already, he may get it by *redeeming* it.

(2.) *Punctuality.*—A singular mischance has occurred to some of our friends. At the instant when He ushered

[1] Good's translation of Lucretius. A similar instance of literary industry is recorded of Dr. Burney, the musician. With the help of pocket grammars and dictionaries, which he had taken the trouble to write out for his own use, he acquired the French and Italian languages when riding on horseback from place to place to give his professional instructions.

them on existence, God gave them a work to do, and He also gave them a competency of time ; so much time, that if they began at the right moment, and wrought with sufficient vigour, their time and their work would end together. But a good many years ago a strange misfortune befell them. A fragment of their allotted time was lost. They cannot tell what became of it, but sure enough it has dropped out of existence ; for just like two measuring-lines laid alongside, the one an inch shorter than the other, their work and their time run parallel, but the work is always ten minutes in advance of the time. They are not irregular. They are never too soon. Their letters are posted the very minute after the mail is made up ; they arrive at the wharf just in time to see the steamboat off ; they come in sight of the terminus precisely as the station-gates are closing. They do not break any engagement nor neglect any duty ; but they systematically go about it too late, and usually too late by about the same fatal interval. How can they retrieve the lost fragment, so essential to character and comfort ? Perhaps by a device like this : suppose that on some auspicious morning they contrived to rise a quarter of an hour before their usual time, and were ready for their morning worship fifteen minutes sooner than they have been for the last ten years ; or, what will equally answer the end, suppose that for once they omitted their morning meal altogether, and went straight out to the engagements of the day ; suppose that they arrived at the class-room or the workshop or the place of business fifteen minutes before their natural time, or that they forced themselves

to the appointed rendezvous on the week-day, or to the sanctuary on the Sabbath-day, a quarter of an hour before their instinctive time of going, all would yet be well. This system carried out would bring the world and themselves to synchronize ; they and the marching hours would come to keep step again, and moving on in harmony, they would escape the fatigue and jolting awkwardness they must experience when old Father Time puts the right foot foremost and they advance the left ; their reputation would be retrieved, and friends who at present fret would begin to smile ; their fortunes would be made ; their satisfaction in their work would be doubled ; and their influence over others and their power for usefulness would be unspeakably augmented.

(3.) *Method.*—A man has got twenty or thirty letters and packets to carry to their several destinations ; but instead of arranging them beforehand, and putting all addressed to the same locality in a separate parcel, he crams the whole into his promiscuous bag, and trudges off to the West End, for he knows that he has got a letter directed thither. That letter he delivers and hies away to the City, when, lo ! the same handful which brings out the invoice for Cheapside contains a brief for the Temple, and a Parliamentary petition, which should have been left, had he noticed it earlier, at Belgrave Square. Accordingly, he retraces his steps and repairs the omission, and then performs a transit from Paddington to Bethnal Green ; till in two days he overtakes the work of one, and travels fifty miles to accomplish as much as a man of method would have managed in fifteen. The man who

has thoroughly mastered that lesson, "A place for everything, and everything in its own place," will save a world of time. He loses no leisure seeking for the unanswered letter or the lost receipt; he does not need to travel the same road twice; and hence it is that some of the busiest men have the least of a busy look. Instead of slamming doors and ringing alarm-bells, and knocking over chairs and children in their headlong hurry, they move about deliberately; for they have made their calculations, and know what time they can count upon. And just as a prodigal of large fortune is obliged to do shabby things, whilst an orderly man of moderate income has always an easy look, as if there were still something left in his pocket—as he can afford to pay for goods when he buys them, and to put something into the collecting-box when it passes him, and after he has discharged all his debts has still something to spare—so is it with the methodical husbanders and the disorderly spendthrifts of time. Those who live without a plan have never any leisure, for their work is never done: those who *time* their engagements and arrange their work beforehand can bear an occasional interruption. They can reserve an evening hour for their families; they can sometimes take a walk into the country, or drop in to see a friend; they can now and then contrive to read a useful book, and amidst all their important avocations they have a tranquil and opulent appearance, as if they still had plenty of time.

(4.) *Promptitude.*—Every scene of occupation is haunted by that "thief of time," procrastination; and all his ingenuity is directed to steal that best of opportunities, the

present time. The disease of humanity, disinclination to the work God has given, more frequently takes the form of dilatoriness than a downright and decided refusal. But delay shortens life and abridges industry, just as promptitude enlarges both. You have a certain amount of work before you, and in all likelihood some unexpected engagements may be superadded as the time wears on. You may begin the work immediately, or you may postpone it till evening, or till the week be closing, or till near the close of life. Your sense of duty insists on its being done; but procrastination says, "It will be pleasanter to do it by and by." What infatuation! to end each day in a hurry, and life itself in a panic! and when the flurried evening has closed, and the fevered life is over, to leave half your work undone! Whatever the business be, do it instantly, if you would do it easily: life will be long enough for the work assigned if you be prompt enough. Clear off arrears of neglected duty; and once the disheartening accumulations of the past are overtaken, let not that mountain of difficulty rise again. Prefer duty to diversion, and cultivate that athletic frame of soul which rejoices in abundant occupation; and you will soon find the sweetness of that repose which follows finished work, and the zest of that recreation in which no delinquent feeling mingles, and on which no neglected duty frowns.

LECTURE III.

AN EYE TO THE LORD JESUS.

"Serving the Lord."—Rom. xii. 11.

"Serving the Lord." The believer is the happy captive of Jesus Christ; he has fastened on himself Immanuel's easy yoke, the light burden and delicious chains of a Saviour's love; and though Christ says, "Henceforth I call you no more servants," the disciple cannot give up the designation; there is no other term by which, at times, he can express that feeling of intense devotedness and self-surrender which fills his loyal bosom. "Truly, O Lord, I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid." And far from feeling any ignominy in the appellation, there are times when no name of Jesus sounds sweeter in his ear than "Jesus, my Lord! Jesus, my Master!" and when no designation more accords with his feeling of entire devotedness than a servant of Jesus Christ, the Lord's bondsman. There are times when the believer has such adoring views of his Saviour's excellency, and such affecting views of his Saviour's claims, that rather than refuse one requirement, he only grudges that the yoke is so easy that he can hardly perceive it, the burden so light that he can scarcely recognise himself as a servant. He would like something which

would identify him more closely with his beloved Saviour, some open badge that he might carry, and which would say for him,

"I'm not ashamed to own my Lord."

If Christ would assign to him some task distinct and definite—if Christ would only give him out of His own hand his daily work to do—he would like it well; and ceasing to be the servant of men, he would fain become the servant of Jesus Christ.

And going to the Saviour in this ardent mood of mind, and saying, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" the Saviour hands you back the Bible. He accepts you for His servant, and He directs you what service He would have you to perform. The book which He gives you is as really the directory of Christ's servants as is the sealed paper of instructions which the commander of an expedition takes with him when he goes to sea, or the letter of directions which the absent nobleman sends to the steward on his estates, or the servant in his house. The only difference is its generality. Instead of making out a separate copy for your specific use, indicating the different things which He would have you to do from day to day, and sending it direct to yourself authenticated by His own autograph, and by the precision and individuality of its details evidently designed for yourself exclusively; the volume of His will is of a wider aspect and more miscellaneous character. It effectually anticipates each step of your individual history, and prescribes each act of your personal duty; but intermingling these with matters of promiscuous import, it leaves abundant scope for your

honesty and ingenuity to find out the precise things which your Lord would have *you* to do. Had it been otherwise, had there been put into the hand of each disciple, the moment he professed his faith in Christ, a sealed paper of instructions, containing an enumeration of the special services which his Lord would have this new disciple to render, prescribing a certain number of tasks which He expected that disciple to perform, and specifying the very way in which He would have them done; in proportion as this directory was precise and rigid, so would it cease to be the test of fidelity, so would it abridge the limits within which an unrestricted loyalty may display itself. As it is, the directory is so plain that he who runs may read; not so plain, however, but that he who stands still and ponders will find a great deal which the runner could not read. It is so peremptory, that no man can call Jesus Lord without doing the things which it commands; but withal so general, as to leave many things to the candour and cordiality of sound-hearted disciples. It is precise enough to indicate the tempers and the graces and the good works with which the Saviour is well pleased, and by which the Father is glorified; but it nowhere fixes the exact amount of any one of these, short of which Christ will not suffer a disciple to stop, or beyond which He does not expect a disciple to go. The Bible does not deal in maximums and minimums; it does not weigh and measure out by definite proportions the ingredients of regenerate character; but it specifies what these ingredients are, and leaves it to the zeal of each believer to add to his faith, not *as many*, but *as much of each* of these things as he

pleases. Firmly averring on the one hand, that without each and all of these graces a man cannot belong to Christ; it, on the other hand, omits to specify how much of each a man must be able to produce, before Jesus say to him, "Well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." The Bible announces those qualities which a man must have, in order to prove him born from above; but it does not tell what quantity of each he must exhibit, in order to secure the smile of his Master, and an abundant entrance into His heavenly kingdom. By this definiteness on the outward side it leaves no room for hypocrisy; but by this indefiniteness on the inner side it leaves large place for the works and service and faith and patience, the filial enterprise and freewill offerings, of those who know no limit to their labours, except the limit of their love to Christ.

You will observe that at the time when you become a disciple of Christ, your Lord and Master takes the whole domain of your employments under his own jurisdiction. He requires you to consecrate your ordinary calling to Him, and to do, over and above, many special things expressly for Himself. Whatsoever you do, in word or deed, He desires that you should do it in His name, not working like a worldling and praying like a Christian, but both in work and prayer, both in things secular and things sacred, setting Himself before you, carrying out His rules, and seeking to please Him. One is your Master, even Christ, and He is your Master in everything,—the Master of your thoughts, your words, your family arrangements, your business transactions,—the Master of your working time, as well as of

your Sabbath-day,—the Lord of your shop and counting-room, as well as of your closet and your pew,—because the Lord of your affections, the proprietor of your very self besides. The Christian is one who may do many things from secondary motives—from the pleasure they afford his friends—from the gratification they give to his own tastes and predilections—from his abstract convictions of what is honest, lovely, and of good report; but his main and predominant motive, that which is paramount over every other, and which, when fully presented, is conclusive against every other, is affection for his heavenly Friend. One is his Master, even Christ, and the love of Christ constraineth him.

Look, now, at the advantages of a motive like this. See how loyalty to Christ secures diligence in business—whether that be business strictly religious or business more miscellaneous.

1. Love to Christ is an abiding motive. It is neither a fancy, nor a sentiment, nor an evanescent emotion. It is a *principle*—calm, steady, undecaying. It was once a problem in mechanics to find a pendulum which should be equally long in all weathers—which should make the same number of vibrations in the summer's heat and in the winter's cold. They have now found it out. By a process of compensations they make the rod lengthen one way as much as it contracts another, so that the centre of motion is always the same: the pendulum swings the same number of beats in a day of January as in a day of June; and the index travels over the dial-plate with the same uniformity, whether the heat try to lengthen, or the

cold to shorten, the regulating power. Now the moving power in some men's minds is sadly susceptible of surrounding influences. It is not principle, but feeling, which forms their pendulum-rod; and according as this very variable material is affected, their index creeps or gallops, they are swift or slow in the work given them to do. But principle is like the compensation-rod, which neither lengthens in the languid heat, nor shortens in the brisker cold, but does the same work day by day, whether the ice-winds whistle or the simoom glows. Of all principles, a high-principled affection to the Saviour is the steadiest and most secure. Other incentives to action are apt to alter or lose their influence altogether. You once did many things for the sake of friends whose wishes expressed or understood were your incentive, and whose ready smile was your recompense. But that source of activity is closed. Those friends are now gone where your industry cannot enrich them, nor your kindness comfort them. Or if they remain, they are no longer the same that once they were. The magic light has faded from off them. The mysterious interest which hovered round them has gone up like a mountain mist, and left them in their wintry coldness or natural ruggedness; no longer those whom once you took them to be. Or you did many things for fame; and you were well requited for a winter's work when the hosanna of a tumultuous assembly, or the pæan of a newspaper paragraph proclaimed you the hero of the hour. But even that sort of satisfaction has passed away, and, meagre diet as these plaudits always were, you stand on the hungry pinnacle,

and, like other aspirants of the same desert-roaming school,[1] you snuff; but alas! the breeze has changed. The popular taste, the wind of fashion, has entirely veered about; and, except an occasional tantalizing whiff from the oasis of a receding popularity, the sweet gust of its green pastures regales you no more. Or you used to work for money—for literal bank-notes and pieces of minted metal. Yes, mere money was your motive. And you would sit up till midnight, or rise in the drowsy morning, to get one piece more. And so truly was this money your chief end—"Where the treasure is, there will the heart be also"—do you not feel as if your money-safe were the metropolis of your affections? Where your money is, is not your heart there also? Were your fortune to flap its wings and fly away, would not you feel as if your happiness had flown away? Have not your very thoughts got a golden tinge? and, tracing some of this Sabbath's meditations back to their source, would you not soon land in the till, the exchange, the counting-room? Is not gold your chiefest joy? But have not flashes of truth from time to time dismayed you? "What am I living for? For a make-believe like this? for a glittering cheat which (in the way that I am using it) will be forgotten in heaven or felt like a canker in hell? How shall I wake up my demented self from this spell-dream, and seek some surer bliss, some more enduring joy? For grant that I shall be buried in a coffin of gold, and commemorated in a diamond shrine, what the happier will it make the *me* that then shall be?" And even without these brighter convictions,

[1] Jer. xiv. 6.

without these momentary breaks in the general delirium of covetousness, do you not feel a duller dissatisfaction occasionally creeping over you and paralysing your busy efforts? "Well—is this right? This headlong hunt of fortune, is it the end for which my Creator sent me into the world? Is it the highest end for which my immortal self can live? Is it the best way of bestowing that single sojourn in this probation-world, which God has given me? And what am I the better? Am I sure that I myself am the happier for it? Dare I flatter myself that, in bequeathing so much money, I bequeath to my children consolidated happiness, a sure and certain good, an inevitable blessing?" And such intrusive thoughts, whose shadows, at least, flit across most serious minds, are very damping to effort—very deadening to diligence in business. Merely serving your friends, in mere pursuit of fame, merely seeking a fortune, you are in constant danger of having all motive annihilated, and so all effort paralysed. But whatever be the business in hand, from the veriest trifle up to the sublimest enterprise; from binding a shoe-latchet to preparing a highway for the Lord; if only you be conscious that this is the work which HE has given you to do, you can go on with a cheerful serenity and strenuous satisfaction; for you will never want a motive. And it is just when other motives are relaxing into languor, that the compensation we spoke of comes into play, and the constraining love of Christ restores the soul and keeps its rate of activity quick and constant as ever. The love of Christ is an abiding motive, and can only lose its power where reason has lost its place. No man ever set the

Lord before him and made it his supreme concern to please his Master in heaven, yet lived to say, "What a fool am I! What a wasted life is mine! What vanity and vexation has Christ's service been! Had I only my career to begin anew, I would seek another master and a higher end."[1] The Lord Jesus ever lives, and never changes; and therefore the believer's love to his Saviour never dies. Growing acquaintance may bring out new aspects of His character; but it will never disclose a reason why the believing soul should love Him less than it loved at first. Growing acquaintance will only divulge new reasons for exclaiming, "Worthy is the Lamb!" and fresh motives for living not unto ourselves, but unto Him that loved us and gave Himself for us.

2. Love to Christ is a motive equal to all emergencies. There is a ruling passion in every mind; and when every other consideration has lost its power, this ruling passion retains its influence. When they were probing among his shattered ribs for the fatal bullet, the French veteran exclaimed, "A little deeper and you will find the emperor." The deepest affection in a believing soul is the love of its Saviour. Deeper than the love of home, deeper than the love of kindred, deeper than the love of rest and recreation, deeper than the love of life is the love of Jesus. And so, when other spells have lost their magic, when no name of old endearment, no voice of onwaiting tenderness, can disperse the lethargy of dissolution, the name that is above every name, pronounced by one who knows it, will kindle its last animation in the eye of death. And when

[1] See Life of Rev. Henry Venn, under A.D. 1785.

other persuasives have lost their power; when other loves no longer constrain the Christian; when the love of country no longer constrains his patriotism, nor the love of his brethren his philanthropy, nor the love of home his fatherly affection, the love of Christ will still constrain his loyalty. There is a love to Jesus which nothing can destroy. There is a leal-heartedness which refuses to let a much-loved Saviour go, even when the palsied arm of affection is no longer conscious of the benignant form it embraces. There is a love, which amidst the old and weary feel of waning years renews its youth, and amidst outward misery and inward desolation preserves its immortal root; which, even when the glassy eye of hunger has forgot to sparkle, and the joy at the heart can no longer mantle on the withered cheek, still holds on, faithful to Jesus, though the flesh be faint. This was the love which made Paul and Silas, fatigued and famished as they were, and sleepless with pain, sing praise so loud that their fellow-prisoners heard and wondered. This was the love which burned in the apostle's breast, even when buffeting the Adriatic's wintry brine, and made the work which at Rome awaited him beam like a star of hope through the drowning darkness of that dismal night. This was the love which thawed his pen, when the moan of autumn winds made him miss the cloak he left at Troas, and impelled him to write to Timothy a testamentary entreaty to "hold fast" the truths which were hastening himself to martyrdom. Devotedness to Christ is a principle which never dies, and neither does the diligence which springs from it.

Dear brethren, get love to the Lord Jesus, and you have everything. Union to Jesus is salvation. Love to Jesus is religion. Love to the Lord Jesus is essential and vital Christianity. It is the mainspring of the life of God in the soul of man. It is the all-inclusive germ, which involves within it every other grace. It is the pervasive spirit, without which the most correct demeanour is but dead works, and the seemliest exertions are an elegant futility. Love to Christ is the best incentive to action—the best antidote to idolatry. It adorns the labours which it animates, and strengthens the friendships which it sanctifies. It is the smell of the ivory wardrobe—the precious perfume of the believer's character—the fragrant mystery which only lingers round those souls which have been to a better clime. Its operation is most marvellous; for when there is enough of it, it makes the timid bold, and the slothful diligent. It puts eloquence into the stammering tongue, and energy into the withered arm, and ingenuity into the dull, lethargic brain. It takes possession of the soul, and a joyous lustre beams in languid eyes, and wings of new obedience sprout from lazy, leaden feet. Love to Christ is the soul's true heroism, which courts gigantic feats, which selects the heaviest loads and the hardest toils, which glories in tribulations, and hugs reproaches, and smiles at death till the king of terrors smiles again. It is the aliment which feeds assurance—the opiate which lulls suspicions—the oblivious draught which scatters misery and remembers poverty no more. Love to Jesus is the beauty of the believing soul; it is the elasticity of the willing steps, and the brightness of the

glowing countenance. If you would be a happy, a holy, and a useful Christian, you must be an eminently Christ-loving disciple. If you have no love to Jesus at all, then you are none of His. But if you have a little love—ever so little—a little drop, almost frozen in the coldness of your icy heart—oh! seek more. Look to Jesus, and cry for the Spirit till you find your love increasing; till you find it drowning besetting sins; till you find it drowning guilty fears—rising, till it touch that index, and open your closed lips—rising, till every nook and cranny of the soul is filled with it, and all the actions of life and relations of earth are pervaded by it—rising, till it swell up to the brim, and like the apostle's love, rush over in a full assurance—"Yes, I am persuaded, that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

"Let troubles rise, and terrors frown,
And days of darkness fall,
Through Him all dangers we'll defy,
And more than conquer all."

LECTURE IV.

A FERVENT SPIRIT.

"Fervent in spirit."—Rom. xii. 11.

The description of work which a man performs will depend very much on the master whom he serves; but the amount and quality of that work will depend as much on the mood of mind in which he does it. The master may be good; and the things which he commands may be good; but unless the servant have an eager willing mind, little work may be done, and that little may not be well done. This is the glory of the gospel. It not only invites you to be the disciples of a Saviour, whose requirements are as worthy of your most strenuous obedience as He himself is worthy of your warmest love; but it undertakes to give you the energy and enterprise which the service of such a Master demands. Besides assigning a good and honourable work for your "business," and Him whom principalities and powers adore for your Master, the gospel offers you the zealous mind which such a work requires, and which such a Master loves.

But what is a fervent spirit?

1. It is a believing spirit. Few men have faith. There are few to whom the Word of God is solid, to whom "the

things hoped for" are substantial, or "the things unseen" evident. There are few who regard the Lord Jesus as living now, or as taking a real and affectionate charge of His people here on earth. There are few who yet expect to see Him, and who are laying their account with standing before His great white throne. But the believer has got an open eye. He has looked within the veil. He knows that the things seen are temporal, and that the things unseen are eternal. He knows that the Lord Jesus lives, and that though unseen He is ever near. He may often forget, but He never doubts His promise: "And lo! I am with you always." This assurance of his ascending Saviour, every time he recalls it, infuses alacrity, animation, earnestness. The faith of this is fervour. "Yes, blessed Saviour! art Thou present now? and seest Thou Thy disciple trifling thus? Is the book of remembrance filling up, and are these idle words and wasted hours my memorial there? And art Thou coming quickly and bringing Thy reward, to give each servant as his work shall be? and is this my 'work'? Lord, help mine unbelief. Dispel my drowsiness. Supplant my sloth, and perfect Thy strength in me."

2. A fervent spirit is an affectionate spirit. It is one which cries Abba, Father. It is full of confidence and love. Peter had a fervent spirit, but it would be hard to say whether most of his fervour flowed through the outlet of adoration or activity. You remember with what a burst of praise his first epistle begins, and how soon he passes on to practical matters: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his

abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away." "Wherefore, laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, as new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." "Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands." "The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder."[1] And as in his epistle, so in his living character. His full heart put force and promptitude into every movement. Is his Master encompassed by fierce ruffians? Peter's ardour flashes in his ready sword, and converts the Galilean boatman into the soldier instantaneous. Is there a rumour of a resurrection from Joseph's tomb? John's nimbler foot distances his older friend, but Peter's eagerness outruns the serener love of John, and past the gazing disciple he bolts breathless into the vacant sepulchre. Is the risen Saviour on the strand? His comrades secure the net, and turn the vessel's head for shore; but Peter plunges over the vessel's side, and struggling through the waves, in his dripping coat falls down at his Master's feet. Does Jesus say, "Bring of the fish ye have caught?" Ere any one could anticipate the word, Peter's brawny arm is lugging the weltering net with its glittering spoil ashore; and every eager movement unwittingly is answering beforehand the question of his Lord, "Simon, lovest thou me?" And that fervour is the best, which, like Peter's, and as occasion requires, can ascend in ecstatic ascriptions of adoration

[1] 1 Peter, commencement of chaps. i. ii. iii. v.

and praise, or follow Christ to prison and to death; which can concentrate itself on feats of heroic devotion, or distribute itself in the affectionate assiduities of a miscellaneous industry.

3. A fervent spirit is a healthy spirit. When a strong spring gushes up in a stagnant pool, it makes some commotion at the first; and looking at the murky stream with its flotilla of duckweed tumbling down the declivity, and the expatriated newts and horse-leeches crawling through the grass, and inhaling the miasma from the inky runnel, you may question whether the irruption of this powerful current has made matters any better. But come anon, when the living water has floated out the stagnant elements, and when, instead of mephitic mud skinned over with a film of treacherous verdure, the bright fountain gladdens its mirrored edge with its leaping fulness, then trips away on its merry path, the benefactor of thirsty beasts and weary fields. So the first manifestations of the new and the spiritual element in a carnal mind are of a mingled sort. The pellicle of decency, the floating duckweed of surface-seemliness, which once spread over the character, is broken up, and accomplishments and amusing qualities, which made the man very companionable and agreeable, have for the present disappeared. There is a great break-up; and it is the passing away of the old things which is at first more conspicuous and less pleasing than the appearance of the new. In these earlier stages of regenerate history, the contrition and self-reproach of the penitent often assume the form of an artificial demureness and voluntary humility; and in the general

disturbance of those elements which have long lain in their specious stagnation, defects of character formerly hidden are perceived sooner than the beauties of a holiness scarce yet developed. But "spring up, O well! sing ye unto it." If this incursive process go freely on—if the living water spring up fast enough to clear out the sedimentary selfishness of the natural mind, with its reptile inmates—if the inflowings of heavenly life be copious enough to impart a truly "fervent spirit"[1]—come again. Survey that character when the love of God has become its second nature. In place of the silt and evil savour, the mean and sordid motives which once fermented there, view the simplicity and godly sincerity—the light-welcoming transparency, which reflects the Sun of Righteousness above it, and the forms of truth around it; and instead of the fast-evaporating scantiness of its former selfishness, follow its track of diffusive freshness through the green pastures which it gladdens, and beneath those branches which gratefully sing over it.[2] Like a sweet fountain, a fervent spirit is beneficent; its very health is healing; its peace with God and joy from God are doing constant good; the gospel of its smiling aspect impresses strangers and comforts saints. And besides this unconscious and incidental usefulness, its active outpourings are a benefit as wide as its waters run. A Christian who is both active and fervent is doing perpetual good, and good in the most benignant way. The substantial service he does is doubly blessed by the joyful, loving, and hope-

[1] Compare the original, τῷ πνεύματι ζέοντες, with John iv. 14, and vii. 38, 39.

[2] Ps. cvi. 10, 12.

ful spirit in which he does it; and though it were only by the gladness which skirts its course, and the amenities which bloom wherever it overflows, beholders might judge how "living," how life-awakening that water is, which Jesus gives to them that believe in Him.

The best, the healthiest, is that calm and constant fervour we have now described; but just as there are intermitting springs which take long time to fill, and then exhaust their fulness in a single overflow—and as there are geysers which jet their vociferous waters high in air, and then are silent for long together—so there are Christians who do not lack fervour, but it comes in fits. They are intermitting springs; they take long to fill, and are emptied in a single gush. Or they are geysers. Some years ago they went up in an explosion of zeal—a smoking whirlspout of fervour—but all is cold and silent now. The water is living, but the well is peculiar; it is only periodically filled; it seldom overflows. But just as you would not like to depend on an intermitting fountain for your cup of daily water, nor to owe the irrigation of your fields to the precarious bounty of a boiling spring—as the well near which you pitch your tent or build your house, is the Elim whose bulging fulness invites you to plunge your pitcher at any hour, and whose deep fed copiousness is constantly wimpling off in fertilizing streams,—so you may be happy to perceive the incidental usefulness even of that zeal which comes fitfully; but you would select as the benefactor of the Church, and as your own resort, the full heart to which you never can come wrong, and whose perennial redundance bespeaks a secret feeding

from the river which makes glad the city of our God.

4. A fervent spirit is a happy spirit. Health is happiness. Peace with God is the life of the soul, and joy in God is its health. That assured and elevated believer who enjoys everything in God and God in everything, must needs be fervent. His inward blessedness makes him bountiful, and to do good and to communicate are things which in his happy mood of mind he cannot help. Some Christians are too dejected. They get under the covert of a peculiar theology, or ensconce themselves in shadowy caves of wilfulness, or pertinacity, or unbelief; and then they complain that they cannot see the Sun of Righteousness. He lightens the world.[1] Let them come out beneath His beams, and at once they will feel the fire. Their shivering faith, which with them is rather the reminiscence of heat, than a resorting to its unfailing Source, will soon mount up to fervour. To look to Jesus is to come to God, and to come home to God is to be happy. An estranged or suspicious spirit cannot be fervent. Then some Christians are not fervent because they are cumbered with so many things. They carry all their own burdens, and from their sympathizing dispositions they have charged themselves with many burdens of their brethren also; but instead of devolving these personal and relative solicitudes on an all-sufficient Saviour, they carry the whole melancholy load themselves. A fearful or a fretful spirit cannot be fervent; but there is no need for a believer in Jesus to be troubled or afraid.[2] Let him deposit all his anxieties

[1] John i. 9. [2] John xiv. 1.

in that ear which is gracious enough to attend to the most trivial, and leave them in that hand which is mighty enough to disperse the most tremendous; and relieved of this incubus, his spirit will acquire an elasticity equal to the most arduous or most multifarious toils. And some believers are not sufficiently fervent, from being straitened in themselves. They do not open their souls to those felicitating influences with which a God of love surrounds them on every side. There is as much comfort in the Word of God, and as much beauty in His works, and as much kindness in His dispensations, as, admitted into the soul, would inundate it with ecstasy. But many hearts are perverse; they let gloomy thoughts and bitter fancies flow freely in, and are almost jealous lest a drop of strong consolation should trickle through on this deluge of Marah. Brethren, it depends on which flood-gate you open, whether you be drowned in a tide of joy or of sorrow. It depends on whether your well-springs are above or beneath, whether with you consolation or grief shall abound. If you listen to what the Amen, the Faithful Witness, is saying,[1] and what God the Father is saying,[2] and what the Spirit and the Bride are saying,[3] and what a glorious universe is saying,[4] and what the gracious events in your daily history are saying,[5] your murmurings will subside into silence, and your vexing thoughts will be drowned in gratitude. Think much of God's chief mercy, and take thankful note of His lesser gifts. And when you have put on this girdle of gladness, your glory will sing and

[1] John xiv.-xvi. [2] Matt. iii. 17. [3] Rev. xxii. 17.
[4] Ps. vii., xix., civ. [5] Ps. cvii.; Isa. xxxviii. 19; Gen. xxxv. 3.

your gratitude will dance.[1] Your soul will be happy, and your joy will find outlets of adoring praise and vigorous industry.

5. A fervent spirit is one filled with the Spirit of God. When Jesus cried, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink," and promised that rivers of living water should flow through the heart of the believer, "He spake of the Spirit which they that believe on him should receive." The Holy Spirit is actually bestowed on the people of God. He is to them a better Spirit, renewing and sanctifying their own. He is the author of that athletic self-denial and flesh-conquering fervour of which they are conscious from time to time. It is He who gives such delight in drawing near to God, that the believer at seasons could "pray and never cease;" and it is He who gives that transforming affection to the person of Christ, and that heroic ardour in the service of Christ, to which inactivity is irksome, and silence oppressive. And whosoever would enjoy the gentle guidance which leads into all truth and all duty—whosoever would persevere in the placid discharge of allotted labour, and maintain amidst it all a calm and thankful walk with God, must put himself at the disposal of this heavenly Visitant. The heart is "dry as summer's dust" from which the Spirit of God departs; and that is the believing, loving, happy, and energetic heart in which the Holy Spirit dwells.

6. A fervent spirit is a prayerful spirit. The Holy Spirit is the New Testament gift most absolutely promised in answer to prayer;[2] and though, perhaps, the gift whose

[1] Ps. xxx. 11, 12. [2] Luke xi. 13; John xiv. 14, 16; xvi. 24.

bestowment is least the matter of a lively consciousness to the recipient at the moment, the gift from which, in the long-run of life, the largest and most important results are evolved, and the gift which, in the retrospect of eternity, the believer may find that he enjoyed more abundantly and more constantly than he himself ever imagined. As it is, there are times when the presence of this Almighty Comforter is easily realized. When the soul is lifted far above its natural selfishness, so that it can make vast sacrifices without any misgiving; when fortified against its natural timidity, so that it can face frightful perils without any trepidation; and when invigorated with such unwonted ardour as to forget its natural indolence and surmount its inherent weakness, the soul can readily understand that this mighty strengthening inwardly is the work of the Holy Spirit. And it is this persuasion which brings the believer strength in weakness. Conscious of lethargy creeping over him, alarmed at the declension of his zeal and the waning of his love, fearful to what his present apathy may grow, and remembering how different were the days of old, he breathes a prayer, at first faint and desponding, but still a prayer: "Wilt thou not revive us again? Awake, O north wind; come, thou south." And, whilst he is yet speaking, he begins to revive. As if the clear weather were brightening the atmosphere, the great realities grow distinct and draw nigh. The things eternal are seen again, and the powers of the coming world are felt. His soul is restored. Or a great work is given him to do, and his strength is small. "O Lord, with thee is the fountain of life. Lord, pity me, for I am weak."

And the Lord pities him, and sends forth His quickening Spirit; and the difficulty is surmounted and the work is done; and, without so much as feeling the fire and water which lay between, he gains the wealthy place.

7. A fervent spirit is one which easily sunders a man from selfishness, and sloth, and other besetting sins. On a winter's day I have noticed a row of cottages, with a deep load of snow on their several roofs; but as the day wore on, large fragments began to tumble from the eaves of this one and that other, till, by and by, there was a simultaneous avalanche, and the whole heap slid over in powdery ruin on the pavement; and before the sun went down, you saw each roof as clear and dry as on a summer's eve. But here and there you would observe one with its snow-mantle unbroken, and a ruff of stiff icicles around it. What made the difference? The difference was to be found within. Some of these huts were empty, or the lonely inhabitant cowered over a scanty fire; whilst the peopled hearth and the high-blazing fagots of the rest created such an inward warmth that grim winter melted and relaxed his gripe, and the loosened mass folded off and tumbled over on the trampled street. It is possible by some outside process to push the main volume of snow from the frosty roof, or chip off the icicles one by one. But they will form again, and it needs an inward heat to create a total thaw. And so, by sundry processes, you may clear off from a man's conduct the dead weight of conspicuous sins; but it needs a hidden heat, a vital warmth within, to produce such a separation between the soul and its besetting iniquities, that the whole wintry

incubus, the entire body of sin, will come spontaneously away. That vital warmth is the love of God abundantly shed abroad—the kindly glow which the Comforter diffuses in the soul which He makes His home. His genial inhabitation thaws that soul and its favourite sins asunder, and makes the indolence and self-indulgence and indevotion fall off from their old resting-place on that dissolving heart. The easiest form of self-mortification is a fervent spirit.

8. And a fervent spirit is the most abundant source of an active life. In heaven there is a perfect activity, because in heaven there is a perfect fervour. They are all happy there. They have a sufficient end in all they do. There is no wearying in their work, for there is no waning in their love. The want of a sufficient object would make any man idle. A friend once found the author of the "Seasons" in bed long after noon; and upbraiding him for his indolence, the poet remarked, that he just lay still because, although he were up, he would have nothing to do. But, even in this sluggish world, there are those whom hearty relish of their work and sense of its importance so inspire, that they are very loath when slumber constrains them to quit it, and often prevent the dawning in order to resume it. It was mathematical fervour which kept Newton poring on his problems till the midnight wind swept over his pages the ashes from his long-extinguished fire. It was artistic fervour which kept Reynolds with the pencil in his glowing hand for thirty-six hours together, evoking from the canvas forms of beauty that seemed glad to come. It was poetic fervour which sus-

tained Dryden in a fortnight's frenzy, when composing his Ode for St. Cecilia's Day, heedless of privations which he did not so much as perceive. It was classical fervour which, for six successive months, constrained the German scholar, Heyne, to allow himself no more than two nights of weekly rest, that he might complete his perusal of the old Greek authors. And it was scientific fervour which dragged the lazy but eloquent French naturalist, Buffon, from beloved slumbers to his still more beloved studies, for many years together. There is no department of human distinction which cannot record its feats of fervour. But shall science, with its corruptible crowns, and the world, with its vanities, monopolize this enthusiasm? If not, let each one consider, What is the greatest self-denial to which a godly zeal has prompted me? Which is the largest or the greatest work through which a holy fervour has ever carried me?[1]

[1] It would have been right, had there been room, to mention some things which are detrimental or fatal to fervour of spirit:—1. Guilt on the conscience. 2. Debt, and worldly entanglements. 3. Sabbaths not sanctified. 4. Late and frequent visiting. 5. Indulgence in frivolous literature. 6. Restraining prayer. 7. A wrong theology.

LECTURE V.

THE THREEFOLD CORD.

"Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord."—ROM. XII. 11.

WERE you ever struck with the sobriety of Scripture? There are many good thoughts in human compositions, and many hints of truth in human systems; but in proportion as they are original or striking, they border on extravagance. You cannot follow them fully till you find yourself toppling on the verge of a paradox, or are obliged to halt in the midst of a glaring absurdity. There are many excellent ideas in the old philosophy, and some valuable principles in the ethics of later schools; but they all show, though it were in nothing but their *extremeness*, their frail original, their human infirmity, their wrong-side bias. And so it is with many religious systems, built on insulated texts of Scripture. They are not without a basis of truth, but that basis is partial. The extremeness of religionism pounces on a single text, or a single class of texts, and walls them off from the rest of revelation, and cultivates them exclusively,—bestows on them the irrigation of constant study, and reaps no harvests except those which grow on this favourite territory,—and looks on all the rest of the Bible as a sort of common, an unenclosed

waste, a territory good for little or nothing, except a short occasional excursion; ay, and perhaps frowns on another class of texts with a secret jealousy, as texts which had better never have been there, a dangerous group, whose creeping roots or wafted seeds threaten evil to the enclosure of their own favourite little system. If the texts so treated be doctrinal, the result of this partiality, this exclusiveness or extremeness, is *sectarianism;* if the texts so treated be practical, the result is *religious singularity.* But sectarianism of doctrine and singularity of practice, whatever countenance they get from single clauses and detached sentences of Scripture, are contradicted and condemned the moment you confront them with the complete Bible. Hence it happens, that whilst there never was a doctrinal or practical error which had not some text to stand upon, there never was one which dared encounter openly and honestly the entire Word of God. In other words, there has seldom been an error which did not include some important truth; but just as surely as it included some truth, so it excluded others. And just as oxygen alone will never make the atmosphere, or hydrogen alone will never make the ocean, or red beams alone will never make the sun, so one fact, or one set of ideas, will never make the truth. A truth, by abiding alone, becomes to all intents an error.

Nothing can be more different from the partiality of man than the completeness and comprehensiveness of Scripture. Nothing can be more opposed to man's extremeness than the sobriety of Scripture. It does not deal in hyperbole or paradox; it puts the truth, calmly, fully,

and in all its goodly proportions. Unlike the systems of man's invention, its ethics do not flutter on the solitary wing of one only virtue, nor do they limp along on the uneven legs of a short theology and a long morality. Its philanthropy does not consist in hating yourself, nor does its love to God require you to forget your brother. Its perfection of character is not pre-eminence in one particular, nor does it inculcate any excellence which requires the annihilation of all the rest. Though neither a see-saw of counterpoising virtues and vices, nor a neutral mixture of opposing elements, there is a balance of excellence, a blending of graces, in the gospel ideal of character. It forgets neither the man himself, nor the God above him, nor the world around him. It teaches us to live godly, but it does not forget to teach us to live righteously and soberly. It urges diligence in business, but it does not omit to enjoin fervour of spirit and devotedness to the Lord.

I do not know that we can select a more opportune exemplification of these contrary principles,—the partiality of human religion and the comprehensiveness of scriptural religion,—than the text with which you are now so familiar, and the treatment which its several precepts have received at the hands of men. I think it may be very easily shown that each separate clause has been the motto of a several sect, the watchword of a separate party: each right, so far as it remembered that special clause—each wrong, so far as it forgot the other two.

1. First, "Not slothful in business." There have been in all ages those who were very willing to sum up religion

in discharging the duties of their calling. If they were servants, they were conscious of great industry, and a real attention to their employers' interest. If wives or mothers, they were notable for keeping at home, and caring for their own concerns. They looked well to the ways of their household, and ate not the bread of idleness; and could the trim threshold and each tidy arrangement of the well-ordered dwelling tell the full tale of anxious thoughts, and early rising, and worrying bustle, which have been expended upon them, happy the empire which had such prime minister as rules this little realm. If men of business, they feel that they are busy men. They mind their own affairs, and do not interfere in other men's matters. They are at it late and early; the summer sun does not seduce them from their dingy counting-room, nor do the amenities of literature bewitch them from the anxieties of money-making. They seldom treat themselves to a holiday, and, what is more to the purpose, they do not despatch business by halves; they work in good earnest. They feel as if the chief end of man lay somewhere about the terminus of their own trade or profession, and they push on accordingly. Then there mingles with it all a complacent feeling. "It is not for myself I thus tug and strive, and grow prematurely old; it is for others. 'He that provides not for his own house, hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.' 'If any man will not work, neither let him eat.' We are commanded to redeem the time, and are forbidden to be slothful in business." And if to this again should be superadded a certain amount of overt and ostensible religion,—if this busy man or cum-

bered housekeeper should withal read a daily chapter, and maintain the regular form of family worship, and the equally regular form of church-going,—above all, if his business should prosper, and nothing occur to vex his conscience, he is very apt to feel, "What lack I yet? True, I pretend to no peculiar sanctity; but I believe I am as honest and industrious and sober as those who do. I may not get into the raptures into which some try to work themselves, nor do I fuss about from sermon to sermon and from meeting to meeting, as many do; but I believe my respect for religion is as real, and my intentions as good as theirs. And though I do not lay the same stress on speculative points and matters of faith, no man can accuse me of neglecting the weightier matters of the law." Now, the industrious element in this character is good, but if this be the whole of it, in the Bible balance it will be found deplorably wanting. A man may be all that you describe yourself, without being born again. He may be all this, and his heart never have been made right with God; and of all the work he has done so heartily, nothing may have been done as unto the Lord,—in the animation of that love, and in the singleness of that loyalty, without which the most fagging toil is but an earnest self-idolatry. And he may be all this without any of that fervour of spirit which will make a man happy in that world, where the things of our present faith are the visible sources of joy, and where praise and adoration and the other out-pourings of ecstatic hearts are the exercises most congenial.

2. But then, again, "fervent in spirit." Others have erred in subliming the whole of Christianity into fervour.

They fancy that there is no outlet for piety except in emotion. They forget that the engine may be doing most work when none of the steam is blowing off; and therefore they are not content except they *feel* a great deal, and live in constant excitement. They forget that the best form that feeling can take is the practical form, the praying, praising, working form. Or if it should take this form, their fervour is ill-directed. It is not fairly distributed; they are fervent in secret or in the sanctuary, but not fervent in society; they are fervent in controversies, but not in truths conceded; they are fervent in the things of their own denomination, but not in the things of Jesus Christ; or if fervent in *His* cause, they fix on the fields of labour far away, and contemn those nearer home. Their fervour is reserved for hallowed places and devotional hours, and does not pervade their daily life. They will rise from a prayer in which they have expatiated on the glory of the latter day,—"Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," and some ordinary duty is awaiting them; they are asked to fulfil some prosaic service, to engage in some such matter-of-fact beneficence as angels in heaven are apt to do; and the sight of actual labour disperses their good frame in a moment: their praying fervour is not a working fervour. Or they have just been singing, under some extraordinary afflatus, a hymn about universal peace or millennial glory; but the unopened letter turns out to be a despatch from some nefarious correspondent, or the moment the worship is over some gross negligence or some provoking carelessness accosts them, and the instant

explosion proves that were they living in the millennium, there would be at least one exception to the universal peace. Or they have come back from some jubilant missionary meeting, where their hearts were really warm, where they loudly cheered the speeches, and where their ears tingled at the recital of some affecting instance of liberality; and they are hardly safe in their homes, when the inopportune collector assails them, and they are asked for the solid sympathy of their substance. Yes; O ignominy! O bathos! after they have given their tears, asked for their gold! And they feel as if it were a fatal transition, a most headlong climax, from delicious emotion down to vulgar money. And thus it is that they continue to let as much feeling vanish in inaction, as much fervour fly off in mere emotion, as, if turned on in the right direction, might have propelled some mighty enterprise, or conducted to a safe and joyful conclusion many a work of faith and labour of love.

3. "Serving the Lord." In Old Testament times it was not unusual for persons of eminent piety to dedicate themselves entirely to temple-service, waiting on God in prayer continually night and day. Thus Samuel was dedicated to the Lord all the days of his life; so we presume was the maid of Gilead, Jephthah's daughter; and so was Anna the prophetess, who departed not from the temple the eighty-four years of her long widowhood. In seeking this seclusion they were practically carrying out the Psalmist's devout behest, "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the

beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple." And a pleasant life it were, away from a stormy world in the calm pavilion of God's own presence, and away from the tantalizing phantoms, vexing cares, and stunning noise of delirious mortality,—to see no beauty less soul-filling than His own, and hear no voice less assuring than His who says, "My peace I give unto you." But the gospel dispensation is not the era of anchorets and recluses and temple devotees; or, more properly speaking, every disciple of the Saviour ought to be alike a devotee. He should live not to himself, but to Him who loved him. He should be a self-devoted, a dedicated man; a living sacrifice, but a sacrifice diffusing its sweet savour in the scenes of ordinary life, and regaling not heaven alone, but earth with its grateful exhalations. He should seek to behold his Lord's beauty and dwell in his Lord's presence all the days of his life; but now that neither Jerusalem nor Samaria is the temple, his believing heart should be the shrine, and his ascending Saviour's promise, "Lo, I am with you," should be the Shekinah. Wherever he goes, he should carry his Lord's presence along with him, and whatever he is doing he should be doing his heavenly Master's work. However, this life of active devotedness does not suit the taste of many. In order to serve the Lord they feel that they must leave the living world. They must off and away to some cleft of the rock, some lodge of the far wilderness, some

> "sacred solitude,
> "Where Quiet with Religion makes her home."

To be diligent in business they feel incompatible with

serving the Lord; and even that more hallowed business which is occupied with ministering to the bodies and souls of men, is a rude break in their retirement, a jar in their contemplative joys. They would rather be excused from anything which forces them into contact with unwelcome flesh and blood, and reminds them of this selfish world and its gross materialism. Their closet is more attractive than the cottage of poverty; meditations of the rest which remaineth are more congenial than toils in the work of the day; and pensive lamentations over the world's wickedness come more spontaneous than real earnest efforts to make this bad world better. Now it is impossible to be too devoted if that devotedness make you correspondently fervent in spirit and diligent in business. You cannot pray too much, though you should pray without ceasing, if your prayer take a practical direction, and lead you to do good without ceasing. But it is just as possible to run away from the Lord's service by running into retirement as by running into the world. In the retirement of the ship, and then in the completer retirement of the whale's belly, Jonah was as much a rebel and a runaway as in the noisy streets of Joppa. Had he wished to "serve the Lord," his "business" was to have been at Nineveh. And it little matters whether it be the recluse of the desert, who absconds from his brethren, and leaves the sick to tend themselves, and the ignorant to teach themselves, and the careless to convert themselves; or the recluse of the closet, who leaves the neglected household to take care of itself, the slipshod children to look after themselves, and the broken furni-

ture to mend itself; each in his own way is slothful in business, under a self-deceiving pretext that he is serving the Lord.

Thus you perceive that each of the three classes, the mere bustlers, the mere feelers, and the mere devotees, by being right in only one thing are altogether wrong. These are not fancy sketches, nor are they studies after the antique. True, you may find the counterpart of the first class in the correct morality and heartless formalism of that worldly professorship, that "Whole-Duty-of-Man" pharisaism which once abounded in these very lands. And you may represent the second by that Antinomian fervour, that unproductive zeal which has marked some periods of the Church, which possibly marks some sections still. And you will find the third exemplified in all the mystic devotion and day-dreaming quietism of world-weary recluses, Popish and Protestant, in every age. Though all can quote one fragment of this text, all are wrong by not being able to quote the whole. Those who are diligent in business, but in that business do not serve the Lord, their selfish diligence is but a busy idleness, a hypocritical activity. Their time-bounded and self-reverting work is the ineffectual labour of the convict who digs the pit and fills it up again, who draws water from the well and pours it back again. And so the devotedness which results in no diligence is like the planning of a house which is never built, the daily purposing of a journey which is never set about. The fervour of spirit which, withal, is slothful in business, is like the stream falling on the mill-wheel, but the connecting shaft is

broken, and though the wheel turns nimbly round, the detached machinery stands still, and no work is done; or like the disconnected engine and tender, which bolt away by themselves, and leave the helpless train still standing where it stood.

Now, in opposition to all these defective versions, these maimed and truncated representations, this verse delineates the Christian character in its completeness, hard-working, warmly-feeling, single-eyed; "not slothful in business," "fervent in spirit," "serving the Lord." And if you look at the Christian philosophy of the subject, you will find that it is the single eye which awakes the fervent spirit, and the fervent spirit which sets the busy hands and feet in willing motion.

1. It is an eye fixed on Jesus which kindles the fervent spirit. An unconverted man is not happy. There is a dull load on his spirit—a dim cloud on his conscience; he scarcely knows what he would be at—but he certainly is not happy. If a considerate man, he is aware that there must be a joy in existence which he has not yet struck out—a secret of more solid bliss which he hitherto has not hit upon. He is not at peace with God. He has not secured an explicit reconciliation with his Creator and Sovereign. God's frown is upon him, a frown as wide as is the sinner's universe. Go where he may, he cannot get out into the clear daylight of a glad conscience and a propitious heaven. And it is not till he finds his way into the Goshen of the gospel, the sun-lit region on which the beams of God's countenance still smile down, through the doorway by which an ascending Saviour entered heaven;

it is not till, from the gross darkness and palpable gloom of a natural condition, a man is led into the grateful light and glorious liberty of the sons of God; it is not till then that he knows the ecstasy of undiluted joy and the perfection of that peace which passeth all understanding. It is not till the Spirit of adoption makes him a child of God that he thoroughly feels himself a man; and it is in the sweet sense of forgiveness, and in the transporting assurance that he is now on the same side with Omnipotence, that he first breathes freely. The thrill of a sudden animation sweeps through all his frame; and, encountering an unwonted gaiety all around him, he perceives an unwonted energy within him. Peace with God has brought him power from God, and with the Lord he loves to dictate his work; there is nothing which he is loath to do, and with the Lord upon his side, nothing which he cannot hope to do. The convict-labour and hireling-tasks of the alien and bondsman are exchanged for the freewill offerings and affectionate services of a son and a disciple. Reconciled to God, he is reconciled to everything which comes from God; and full of the love of Christ, he courts everything which he can do for Christ. "Come, labour, for I rather love thee now. Come, hard work and long work, I am in a mood for you now. Come, trials and crosses, for I can carry you now. Come, death, for I am ready for thee now." His relation to Christ has put him in a new relation to everything else; and the same fountain which has washed the stain from his conscience having washed the scales from his eyes, an inundation of light and of beauty bursts in from the creation around

him, which hitherto was to him as much an unknown universe as its Creator was the unknown God; and the boundless inflowings of peaceful images, and happy impressions, and strong consolations, dilate his soul with an elasticity, an enterprise, and courage as new as they are divine. He has found a Saviour, and his soul is happy. The Lord Jesus is his friend; and his spirit, once so frigid, is become a fervent spirit. His new views have made him a new man.

2. The fervent spirit creates the industrious life. Sulky labour and the labour of sorrow are little worth. Whatever a man does with a guilty feeling, he is apt to do wrong; and whatever he does with a melancholy feeling, he is likely to do by halves. Look to that little boy sitting down to his hated lesson after a burst of passion. Do you notice how long the same page lies open before the pouting student, and how solemnly he watches the blue-bottle raging round the room and bouncing against the window? Look at his blurred copy-book, its trembling strokes and blotted loops, a memento of this angry morning. And the sum upon the slate, only here and there a figure right, an emblem of his rebellious mind, all at sixes and sevens with itself. It is *guilt* that makes him a trifler. It is *guilt* that makes him blunder. *Guilt* makes him wretched; and therefore all he does is wrong. But sometimes grief disables or disinclines for exertion as much as guilt. You may remember times when such a sorrow possessed you, that you not only forgot to eat your daily bread, but had no heart to do your daily work. You did not care to set your house in order; for some stunning

intelligence or fearful foreboding had paralysed your energy. You did not care to hear your children's tasks; for the shadows of yonder sick-room had diffused a look of orphanage on them and on everything. And the more delightsome the recreation once had been, the more congenial the labour, so much the deeper was the funeral dye it had now imbibed, and the more did your heart revolt from it. Sorrow makes the eyes heavy, even when they cannot sleep; and, for inefficiency, next to the blundering work of a guilty conscience, is the dull work of a weary or wounded spirit. If you could only shed tranquillity over the conscience, and infuse joy into the soul, you would do more to make the man a thorough worker than if you could lend him the force of Hercules, or the hundred arms of Briareus. Now, the gospel freely admitted makes the man happy. It gives him peace *with* God and makes him happy *in* God. Its strong consolation neutralizes the sting of reluctant labour and the curse of penal toil. Its advent of heavenly energy takes the languor out of life, and much of its inherent indolence out of lazy human nature. It chases spectres from the fancy and lions from the street. It gives industry a noble look which selfish drudgery never wore; and from the moment that a man begins to do his work for his Saviour's sake, he feels that the most ordinary employments are full of sweetness and dignity; and that the most difficult are not impossible. "Through Christ strengthening me I can do all things." Even in the affairs of ordinary life, the best—the most beautiful and effective work which a man can do is full-hearted work; the clever, conclusive, tasteful work which

quits the masterly hands or the invigorated mind of him whose heart is glad. And if any one of you, my friends, is weary with his work; if dissatisfaction with yourself, or sorrow of any kind, disheartens you; if, at any time, you feel the dull paralysis of conscious sin, or the depressing influence of vexing thoughts, look to Jesus and be happy. Be happy, and your joyful work will prosper well.

LECTURE VI.

A WORD TO EACH AND TO ALL.—CONCLUSION.

"Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord."—
ROM. XII. 11.

CHRISTIAN industry is just the outlet of a fervent spirit, a Christ-devoted heart. The industry which is not fervent is not Christian, and, on the other hand, the love which does not come forth in action, the fervour which does not lead to diligence, will soon die down. He who has an eye to Christ in all he does, and whose spirit is full of that energy, that love to his work and his brethren and his Master in heaven, which the Holy Spirit gives, will not soon weary in well-doing.

1. Some of you are SERVANTS. Some of you are in families where there is no fear of God, and some of you serve employers who take no interest in you, who, however hard you toil, and however well you do your work, never thank you, or notice your exertions. This is discouraging; but before you entered that family, had you not entered the service of the Lord Jesus Christ? and when you came to this new place you surely did not leave this higher and nobler service. Very true, the individual from whom you receive your immediate orders may be very unreasonable, and exceedingly unamiable, and the thanks

you get may be sorry remuneration for your conscientious industry. But have you not a Master in heaven, whose eye is always upon you, who takes interested note of all you do, and who, whatever you do in secret for *His* sake, will reward you openly? You do not mean to say that all your end in working is to get so much wages, with a kind word or a look of approval now and then? If you carry the spirit of discipleship into your every-day duties, you will find that there is a way to make the meanest occupation honourable, and the most irksome employment easy. Work which you do for the Lord's sake will never be wearisome; and however little man may notice or acknowledge it, your labour in the Lord will never be in vain. And I know not if there be any department of life where there is more abundant room for a truly Christian ambition than the calling which you occupy. Whether, like Eliezer of Damascus, you serve a Father of the Faithful, or, like Joseph and the Israelitish maid, be in the household of a Pagan or a worldling; you have singular opportunities for adorning the doctrine of your God and Saviour. Good man as Abraham was, and good man as Eliezer was, there was once a time when Abraham in a tone of evident disappointment said, "Behold, to me thou hast given no seed, and lo, one born in my house is mine heir." But so completely had the consistent kindness and fidelity of Eliezer won the affection of his chief, that at the last Abraham could scarcely have wished a better heir than his servant, or Eliezer found a more indulgent father than his master. Joseph had no motive for serving Pharaoh, except that anxiety to fulfil an important office

well, and that hearty love of labour which distinguish men of a healthy mind and conscientious spirit. But such a zealous charge did he take of Pharaoh's interests, so intelligently and sleeplessly did his eye travel through the realm, that Egypt wore another aspect under Joseph's rule, and its revenues became as rich as a provident and benignant administration could make them. The little maid of Israel was a captive, and if the joy of the Lord had not been her strength, she would have had no spirit to work. She would have pined after her home among the hills of Samaria; and when she thought of the pleasant cottage from which fierce ruffians had torn her away, and named over to herself, one by one, the playfellows whom she would never see again, she would have broken her young heart and sat down in sulky silence, or perhaps have died. But she loved the Lord God of Israel; and as He had sent her to Damascus and into the house of a heathen lady, she made up her mind and set to work right earnestly, and soon got on to take a real interest in her new abode. She loved her mistress and was sorry for the deplorable sufferings of her afflicted lord, and suggested the visit to Elisha which resulted in his wondrous cure. And both Joseph and the little maid, by serving the Lord with a fervent spirit, not only made their own life pass pleasantly in a foreign land, but they made a great impression on those around them. Joseph's God was magnified in the eyes of Pharaoh, and the little maid soon saw Naaman a worshipper of the true Jehovah. And you who are in the service of others, seek to serve the Lord. Perhaps, like Joseph and the little maid, you are far from home. Per-

haps, like them, you are doing work for those in whom you had no interest formerly, and who even now have not the fear of God before them. But your Lord paramount is the Lord Jesus himself; the real Master who has sent you here and given you this up-hill work to do is Christ; and if you only set about it for His sake, with a happy, interested, resolute mind, your work will grow every day easier; your conscience will sing; the light of the Lord's presence will gild the dim passages and stranger-looking chambers of your place of sojourn; your character will ere long commend itself, and, better still, may commend your Master in heaven. "For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men."

2. Some of you are SCHOLARS, either receiving the education which fits for ordinary life, or which may qualify you for some particular profession. Here, too, you have need of industry. I hope you love learning for its own sake; I hope you love it still more for the Lord's sake. The more things you know and the more things you can do, the more respected, and consequently the more influential and useful you will hereafter be. If you grow up an ignorant man, few will care for your company. People will be laughing at your mistakes and your blunders. And even if you should be wishful to do good, you will scarcely know how to set about it. The usefulness and happiness of your future life depend very much on the amount of solid learning and graceful accomplishments, and above all, on the extent of Bible knowledge which you presently acquire; and if you be only willing, you may acquire as much as ever you please. To use the words of the most

philosophic of British artists, "Nothing is denied to well-directed diligence." Long ago, a little boy was entered at Harrow School. He was put into a class beyond his years, and where all the scholars had the advantage of previous instruction, denied to him. His master chid him for his dulness, and all his own efforts could not raise him from the lowest place on the form. But, nothing daunted, he procured the grammars and other elementary books which his class-fellows had gone through in previous terms. He devoted the hours of play, and not a few of the hours of sleep, to the mastering of these; till in a few weeks he gradually began to rise, and it was not long till he shot ar ahead of all his companions, and became not only *dux* of that division, but the pride of Harrow. That boy, whose career began with this fit of energetic application, you may see his statue in St. Paul's Cathedral to-morrow; for he lived to be the greatest Oriental scholar of modern Europe, and most of you have heard the name of Sir William Jones. God denies nothing in the way of learning to well-directed diligence. It is possible that you may be rather depressed than stimulated when asked to contemplate some first-rate name in literature or science. When you see the lofty pinnacle of attainment on which that name is now reposing, you feel as if it had been created there rather than had travelled thither. No such thing. The most illustrious in the annals of philosophy, once on a time, knew no more of it than you now do. And how did he arrive at his peerless proficiency? By dint of diligence; by downright painstaking. When Newton was asked how he came by those discoveries which looked like divination

or intuitions of a higher intelligence rather than the results of mere research, he declared that he could not otherwise account for them unless it were that he could pay longer attention to the subject than most men cared to do. In other words, it was by diligence in his business that he became the most renowned of British sages. The discovery of gravitation, the grand secret of the universe, was not whispered in his ear by any oracle. It did not drop into his idle lap a windfall from the clouds. But he reached it by self-denying toil, by midnight study, by the large command of accurate science, and by bending all his powers of mind in the one direction, and keeping them thus bent. And whatever may be the subject of your pursuit, if you have any natural aptitude for it at all, there is no limit to your proficiency except the limits of your own painstaking. There is no wishing-cap which will fetch you knowledge from the east or west. It is not likely to visit you in a morning dream, nor will it drop through your study roof into your elbow-chair. It is not a lucky advent which will alight on your loitering path some twilight, like Minerva's owl, and create you an orator, an artist, or a scholar on the spot. It is an ultimatum which you must make up your mind that it is worth your while attaining; and trudge on steadily towards it, and not count that day's work hard, nor that night-watching long, which advances you one step towards it, or brings its welcoming beacon one bright hope nearer.

3. Some of you are TEACHERS. It is much to be lamented that there are so few enthusiasts in this honourable and important work. Many who are engaged in it regard it

as a bondage, and sigh for the day which shall finally release them from its drudgery and din. They have never felt that theirs is a high calling, nor do they ever enter the schoolroom with the inspiring consciousness that they go as missionaries and pastors there. They undervalue their scholars. Instead of regarding them as all that now exists of a generation as important as our own; instead of recognising in their present dispositions the mischief or beneficence which must tell on wide neighbourhoods ere a few short years are run; instead of training up immortal spirits and expansive minds for usefulness now and glory afterwards, many teachers have never seen their pupils in any other light than as so many rows of turbulent rebels, a rabble of necessary torments, a roomful of that mighty plague with which the Nile of our noisy humanity is all croaking and jumping over. And many undervalue themselves. Instead of recollecting their glorious vocation, and eyeing the cloud of teacher-witnesses with whom they are encompassed; instead of a high-souled zeal for their profession, as that which should form the plastic mind after the finest models of human attainment and scriptural excellence, many regard their office as so menial that they have always the feeling as if themselves were pedants. To prescribe the task, to hear the lesson, to administer monotonous praise and blame, is the listless round of their official perfunctoriness. But there are few fields of brighter promise than the calling of a teacher. If he give himself wholly to it, if he set before him the highest object of all tuition, the bringing souls to Christ; if he can form a real affection for his

scholars, and maintain a parental anxiety for their proficiency and their principles; if he has wisdom enough to understand them, and kindness enough to sympathize with them; if he has sufficient love for learning to have no distaste for lessons, he will be sure to inspire a zeal for study into the minds of many, he will win the love of all except the very few whose hearts are deaf-born, and in a short time the best features of his own character will be multiplying in spheres far-sundered, in the kindred persons of grateful pupils. Should he live long enough, they will praise him in the gate of public life, or cheer his declining days in the homes which he taught them to make happy. Or should he die soon enough, the rest from his labours will ever and anon be heightened by the arrival of another and another of the children whom God hath given him.[1]

But without descending to more minute particulars, let me remind you, my friends, that all of you who are members of this Church have got a special "business" as the professed disciples of Jesus Christ. In the day when Christ said to you, "Arise, follow me," he called you to a life like His own, a life of industry and self-denial, and continual doing good. You are a consistent Christian in proportion as you resemble Him whose fervent spirit flowed forth not more in His midnight prayers than in His daily deeds of mercy, and who, whether He disputed with the doctors in the temple, or conversed with the ignorant stranger at the well, or fed the five thousand with miraculous loaves, or summoned Lazarus from the tomb, was still about his Father's "business." They little

[1] See Note B p. 97.

understand the Christian life, who fancy that a slothful or languid profession will secure an abundant entrance into the heavenly kingdom. If the believer's progress from the cross to the crown be, as it is again and again represented, a race, a wrestling, a warfare, a fight, a continual watching, and a constant violence, there is good reason for the exhortations, "Give *diligence* to make your calling and election sure." "We desire that every one of you do show *diligence* to the full assurance of hope unto the end; that ye be *not slothful*, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises." "Wherefore, brethren, seeing that ye look for such things, be *diligent* that ye may be found of Him in peace, without spot, and blameless."

It needs diligence to keep the conscience clean: "Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men." It needs diligence to keep up a happy hopefulness of spirit: "Gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end." It needs diligence to maintain a serene and strenuous orthodoxy: "Watch ye; stand fast in the faith; quit you like men; be strong." It needs diligence to maintain a blameless life: "Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin." It needs diligence to lead a life conspicuously useful and God-glorifying: "Seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses (as Abel, and Enoch, and Noah, and Abraham, and Moses), let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus." And it needs diligence to attain a joyful welcome from Jesus and a full reward·

"And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue (fortitude); and to fortitude, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly-kindness; and to brotherly-kindness, charity. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure; for if ye do these things (fortitude, etc.), ye shall never fall; for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." "And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them." "Let us labour, therefore, to enter into that rest."[1]

To labour in the word and doctrine is the business of one; to feed the flock of God and rule the Church of Christ is the business of others; to "serve tables," to care for and comfort the poor, and see that all things be done decently and in order, is the business of yet others; to teach the young and instruct the ignorant is the business of some; and to train up their households in the nurture and admonition of the Lord is the business of others; to obey their parents, and to grow in wisdom—in favour with God and man—is the business of many; and to do work for others, with a willing hand and a single eye, is the business of many more. The work of the day needs diligence; much more does the work of eternity. It needs fervent diligence to be constantly serving our fellows;

[1] 2 Pet. i. 5-7, 10, 11; Rev. xiv. 13; Heb. iv. 11.

and it needs no less diligence to be directly serving Christ. To tend the sick, to visit the widows and fatherless in their affliction, to frequent the abodes of insulated wretchedness or congregated depravity, to set on foot schemes of Christian benevolence, and, still more, to keep them going —all this needs diligence. To put earnestness into secret prayer; to offer petitions so emphatic and express, that they are remembered afterwards, and the answer watched for and expected; to commune with one's own heart, so as to attain some real self-acquaintance; to get into that humble, contrite, confessing frame, where the soul feels it sweet to lie beneath the cross, and "a debtor to mercy alone, of covenant mercy to sing;" to stir up one's soul to a thankful praising pitch; to beat down murmuring thoughts, and drive vexing thoughts away; to get assurance regarding the foundations of the faith, and clear views of the truth itself; to have a prompt and secure command of Scripture, to possess a large acquaintance with the great salvation, and a minute acquaintance with all the details of Christian duty: all this needs no less diligence on our part, because God must give it or we shall never show it. To put life into family worship; to make it more than a duteous routine; to make its brief episode of praise and prayer and Bible-reading a refreshful ordinance, and influential on the day; to give a salutary direction to social intercourse, and season with timely salt the conversation of the friendly circle; to drive that "torpid ass,"[1] the body, to scenes of duty difficult and long-adjourned; to make a real business of public worship;

[1] Calvin on the text.

to scowl away all pretexts for forsaking the solemn assembly; to spirit the reluctant flesh into a punctual arrival at the house of prayer, and then to stir up the soul to a cordial participation in all its services; to accompany with alert and affectionate eyes the reading of God's Word, and listen with wakeful ear to the exposition and application of its lively oracles; to contribute a tuneful voice and a singing heart to our New Testament offering of praise, and to put the whole stress of an intelligent and sympathizing and believing earnestness into the supplications of the sanctuary, so that each petition shall ascend to the throne of grace with the deliberate signature of our Amen;—all this requires a diligence, none the less because unless God work it in us, we shall never of ourselves muster up sufficient fervour thus to serve the Lord.

Dear brethren and Christian friends, consider what I say. There is little time to apply it; but you have heard from this text some hints of important truth—apply them for yourselves. As reasons why we desire to see a Church more industrious and not less fervent and unworldly than the Church has usually been, and as motives why each right-hearted man among you should this night start afresh on a career of busy devotedness and fervent industry, let me remind you,

1. Herein is the Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit.

2. Herein will you truly resemble, and in measure re-exhibit the character of your blessed Lord and Master.

3. Hereby will yourselves be made far happier.

4. Hereby will the world be the better for your sojourn in it.

5. Hereby will the sadness of your departure be exceedingly alleviated.

6. And hereby will your everlasting joy be unspeakably enhanced.

Forbearing to dwell on these different considerations, let me revert for a little to the latter two.

A life of diligence and holy fervour prepares the believer for a peaceful departure. "Father, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do; and now I come to thee." It was with unspeakable satisfaction that the Saviour contemplated His return to the Father's bosom; and the reason was because He knew so well that He had finished His Father's business. He could look back on the weary days and sleepless nights of His ministry, on the long years of His incarnation; and He saw that there was no righteousness which He had not fulfilled, no precept of the holy law which He had nct magnified. His memory could not recall an idle word or a wasted hour; and even from the solemn twilight of Gethsemane His eye could trace serenely back the whole expanse of His earthly history, and see not one word which He would wish to revoke; not one act which He could desire to alter; no sermon which, if He had to preach it over again, He would make more plain or more importunate; no miracle which, if it had to be performed afresh, He would do in a more impressive or effectual manner. He knew that there was no omission, no defect; and though the whole were to be done anew, He felt that the words could not be more gracious nor the works more wonderful than they had actually been. "Father, I have glorified thee

on earth. I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do; and now I come to thee." The Lord Jesus was the first and the last who ever was able to say this: but through His strength made perfect in their weakness, some have made a nearer approach to this blessedness than their more remiss and indolent brethren. It was the grief of the pagan emperor Titus, when a day transpired in which he had learned no knowledge or done no good,—"I have lost a day." And—

> "'Tis a mournful story,
> Thus in the ear of pensive eve to tell
> Of morning's firm resolves the vanish'd glory,
> Hope's honey left within the with'ring bell,
> And plants of mercy dead, that might have bloom'd so well."[1]

But it is a far more mournful story when the eve of life arrives, to be constrained to sigh, "I have lost a lifetime." "God gave me one lifetime, and it was once in my power to spend it as Aquila and Priscilla spent theirs, as Paul spent his, as Phebe spent hers. But now, that only life is closing, and, woe's me! how have I bestowed it? In dressing and promenading, in paying morning calls and evening visits." "And *I?*—I have spent it in reading newspapers and novels, in dancing and singing songs, and telling diverting stories." "And *I* have spent it in drinking and smoking, in games of cards and billiards, in frequenting taverns and theatres, in reading coarse tales and books of blasphemy." Yes; and though you should not need to look back on a life thus sinfully spent, it will be sad enough to review a life let idly slip. To think that by a right starting, and a persevering continuance in well-

[1] Mrs. Sigourney.

doing, it was once in your power to have proved the large and permanent benefactor of your generation; to think that had you only begun with the Lord and held on in fervour of spirit, you might by this time have finished works which would make many bless your memory, and planted seeds of which hundreds would reap the pleasant fruits when yourself were in the clay; and then to remember that once on a time you had it in contemplation, it was all planned out and resolved upon, and day-dreamed over and over, but never resolutely gone about—to recollect "the morning's firm resolves" and sunny purposes, and then look at

> "the vanish'd glory,
> Hope's honey left within the with'ring bell,
> And plants of mercy dead, that might have bloom'd so well;"

how dreary it will make your deathbed, if capable of deliberate reflection then! How disconsolate it will render the retrospective evening of your days, should you reach old age! And how different it will make your exit from his, who, looking back on his eventful career, could say, "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day."

A life of Christian diligence is followed by an abundant entrance and a full reward. There are two principles deep-seated in our nature: philosophy has got no name for them, but the Bible has an eye to each of them, and the gospel speaks to both of them. The possessions which

we chiefly prize are either those which we have earned by our own industry, or gifts we have got from those we truly love. Perhaps there is some little slide in your desk, some secret drawer in your cabinet, which you do not open often;—but when on a quiet holiday you pull it gently out and look leisurely at it, your eye fills with tears. You read the date on the faded book-marker with a pensive smile, or you press the little picture to your lips, and drop upon your knees to pray for him whose image that little picture is. But a hard-visaged stranger peering over your shoulder might marvel what all this emotion meant; for he would not give a crown-piece for the whole collection, and would see the materials of a more rational interest in the bunch of bank-notes and bills and Government-securities in the adjacent locker. And why do you prize it so? That picture was a keep-sake from your brother when he crossed the Indian main ten summers since; that broidered ribbon is the only relic of the sister's love, who made you many a like remembrance, but whose mouldering fingers will make no more. Love lingers in these relics, and that is the reason why, when you stuff the bank-notes in your pocket, you clasp these trifles to your heart. Far more, if the gift or the bequest be one of vast intrinsic value. The estate, the house, the lands which a fatherly kinsman or a dear friend conveyed to you—you prize them infinitely more than if they had come to you in the course of nature, or by the laws of ordinary succession. As you look over the pastures and corn-fields, the tear sometimes tingles in your eye, and you are again filled with amazement as you

think of such unaccountable kindness. You commemorate the unusual gift by the giver's name. By some adjective of gratitude you connect it with his dear memory; and much as you may value it for its inherent worth, it is more precious still for the beloved donor's sake.

Then, next to the possessions round which there hovers some symbol of living affection or departed kindness, we prize those possessions in which we recognise the fruits of our own diligence, the purchase of our own painstaking. What a bright coin was that first sovereign which your own diligence ever earned! How solid and weighty did it feel! How fair did the monarch's image and superscription shine on its fresh-minted face, and how endless did its capabilities appear! And wherefore such overweening affection for that one golden piece, for had you not possessed from time to time pocket-money of your own before? Yes—but it came too easily; it wanted the pleasant zest of industry; it did not bring into your bosom, as this one does, a whole freight of happy recollections, frugal hours, and self-denying labours, condensed into one solid equivalent, one tangible memento. What are the books in your library which you chiefly prize? Next to the gift-Bible which solemnized the first birthday when you could read it; next to the book which your dying friend lifted from his pillow, and with your name tremulously inscribed, handed you on your last visit, when he yet had strength to do it; are they not the books which rewarded your blushing proficiency at the village school, or commemorated your nightly labours in the first and happiest years of college-life, or those which your long-

hoarded savings first enabled you to purchase? Why do you look with a kindlier eye on that juvenile literature than on the long rows of glittering learning and august philosophy which fill your crowded shelves? Why, but because the light of early days and industrious hours still floats around them. They are the sunny shrines in which much of your former self lies pleasantly entranced, ready to start into a mellower life the moment memory bids it. Or why is it that in the midst of luxuries and accommodations as abundant as wealth can purchase or ingenuity suggest, fruit from trees of the proprietor's own planting, or from a garden of his own tending, tastes so sweet? Why is it that the rustic chair of his own contriving, or the telescope of his own constructing, so far surpasses any which the craftsman can send him? Why, the reason is, those apples have an aroma of industry, a smack of self-requiting diligence peculiar to themselves. That rustic seat is lined with self-complacent labour; and the pleasant consciousness of having made that telescope himself has so sharpened the maker's eye, as greatly to augment its magnifying power. God has so made the mind of man, that a peculiar deliciousness resides in the fruits of personal industry.

The possessions which we chiefly prize are the gifts of affection and the fruits of painstaking; those in which something of ourself, or a dearer than ourself, still lives, and speaks, and feels. Now in regard to the heavenly inheritance itself, the God of Love has consulted both of those deep-seated principles of the human soul. The heaven itself, the passport through its gates, and the right

to its joys, are the purchase and the gift of Another. Nor is it to the believer the least enhancing element in its priceless possession, that it is entirely the donation and bequest of his dearest Friend. Looking forward to the pearly gates and golden streets of the celestial city, its love-built mansions and its life-watered paradise, the believer in Jesus delights to remember that they are purely the purchase, and as purely the gift of Immanuel. To think that he shall yet have his happy home on that Mount Zion; that, with feet no longer sin-defiled, he shall tread its radiant pavement and stand on its glassy sea; that, with fingers no longer awkward, he shall tell he harps of heaven what once he was, and who made him what he is; that, with a voice no longer trembling, he shall transmit along the echoes of eternity the song of Moses and the Lamb; to think that his shall yet be a brow on which the drops of toil will never burst, and an eye which tears will never dim; that he himself shall wear a form that years shall never bend, and a countenance which grief can never mar; that his shall yet be a character on which the stains of time will leave no trace, and his a conscience pure enough to reflect the image of Him who sits upon the throne—the thought of all this is amazement, ecstasy. But there is one thought more which puts the crown upon this blessedness—the climax on this joy—

"These glorious hopes we owe to Jesus' dying love."

The name of this fair inheritance, Free Grace, God is Love, Jehovah-Tsidkenu, identifies it with that name which the Christian loves beyond all others. That heaven to which Immanuel is the living way,—on whose earth-

ward entrance atoning blood is sprinkled, on whose many mansions and amaranth crowns are the symbols which connect them with Calvary, and amidst all whose countless joys, the river of deepest pleasure is the love of Jesus,—this is the only heaven to which the believer expects an entrance, and is the one of which his intensest longing says, "Would God that I were there!"

But even in this purchased possession there are ingredients of delight of an origin more personal to the believer himself,—details of special blessedness, for the germ of which he must go back to his own earthly history; and just as the sweetest surprisals here below are those in which some efforts of benevolence long by-gone reverts upon you in its happy results—when you meet a stranger, and are charmed with his Christian intelligence and spiritual congeniality, and lo! it turns out that his religious history dates from a casual conversation with yourself in the guest-chamber or the public conveyance; or when you take refuge from the storm in a wayside cottage, and surveying with eager interest its arrangements of unwonted comfort and tastefulness, or listening to the Bible lesson of its little children fresh from school, mysterious hints of some similar yet different scene steal in upon your memory, till you begin to think, "I have surely been here before;" and anon the full truth flashes out; you have been there before, when it was a very different scene—when a drunken husband and ragged children and broken furniture aroused your desponding commiseration; but the tract which you that day left has introduced sobriety, and a Sabbath, and a Family Bible into that abject home, and made it what your grateful eyes now see;—so the sweetest surprisals of

eternity will be similar resurrections of the works of time. When the disciple has forgotten the labour of love, he will be reminded of it in the rich reward; and though he never thought any more of the cup of cold water which he gave, or the word in season which he spake in Jesus' name—though he made no memorandum of the visits of mercy which he paid, or the asylums which he found for the orphan and the outcast—it seems that they are registered in the Book of Remembrance, and will all be read by their happy author in the reviving light of glory. To find the marvellous results which have accrued from feeble means—to encounter higher in salvation than yourself those of whose salvation you scarcely ever hoped to hear, and learn that an entreaty or prayer or forgotten effort of your own had a divine bearing on the joyful consummation—to find the prosperous fruit already growing on the shores of eternity from seeds which you scattered on the streams of time—with what discoveries of unexpected delight it will variegate the joys of the purchased possession, and with what accessions of adoration and praise it will augment the exceeding weight of glory! O brethren! strive to obtain an abundant entrance and a full reward. Seek to be so useful that the world shall miss you when away; or whether this world miss you or not, that in a better world there may be many to welcome you as you enter it, and many to follow you when you have long been there. Above all, so live for Christ, so travail in His service, that when you fall asleep, a voice may be heard from heaven, saying, "Blessed are the dead which die IN THE LORD: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their LABOURS, and their WORKS do follow them."

NOTES.

Note A, p. 18.

It would not be easy to estimate the good of which day-dreams have defrauded the world. Some of the finest intellects have exhaled away in this sluggish evaporation, and left no vestige on earth, except the dried froth, the obscure film which survives the drivel of vanished dreams; and others have done just enough to show how important they would have been had they awaked sooner or kept longer awake at once. Sir James Mackintosh was one of the latter class. His castle-building "never amounted to conviction; in other words, these fancies have never influenced my actions; but I must confess that they have often been as steady and of as regular recurrence as conviction itself, and that they have sometimes created a little faint expectation, a state of mind in which my wonder that they should be realized would not be so great as it rationally ought to be."—(*Life*, vol. i. p. 5.) Perhaps no one in modern times has been capable of more sagacious or comprehensive generalizations in those sciences which hold court in the high places of human intellect than he; but a few hints and a fragment of finished work are all that remain. Coleridge never sufficiently woke up from his long life-dream to embody completely any of the glorious visions which floated before his majestic fancy, some of which the world would now be too happy to possess. And, returning from secular philosophy to matters of Christian practice, has the reader never met those whose superior gifts would

have made them eminently useful, and who had designs of usefulness, philanthropic schemes of peculiar ingenuity and beauty, but who are passing away from earth, if they have not passed away already, without actually attempting any tangible good? And yet so sincere are they in their own inoperative benevolence, so hard do they toil and sweat in building palaces of sand, that nothing could surprise them more than the question, "What do ye more than others?" unless it were their own inability to point out the solid product and permanent results.

Note B, p. 82.

A happier exemplification of the text in the department of tuition can nowhere be found than in the Life of Dr. Arnold of Rugby.

"The most remarkable thing which struck me at once on joining the Laleham circle was the wonderful healthiness of tone and feeling which prevailed in it. Everything about me I immediately found to be most real; it was a place where a new-comer at once felt that a great and earnest work was going forward.

"Dr. Arnold's great power as a private tutor resided in this, that he gave such an intense earnestness to life. Every pupil was made to feel that there was a work for him to do —that his happiness as well as his duty lay in doing that work well. Hence, an indescribable zest was communicated to a young man's feeling about life, a strange joy came over him on discovering that he had the means of being useful, and thus of being happy; and a deep respect and ardent attachment sprang up towards him who had taught him thus to value life and his own self and his work and mission in this world.

"All this was founded on the breadth and comprehensiveness of Arnold's character, as well as its striking truth and reality; on the unfeigned regard he had for work of all kinds, and the sense he had of its value, both for the complex aggregate of society and the growth and perfection of the individual.

"Thus pupils of the most different natures were keenly stimulated; none felt that he was left out, or that, because he was not endowed with large powers of mind, there was no sphere open to him in the honourable pursuit of usefulness. This wonderful power of making all his pupils respect themselves, and of awakening in them a consciousness of the duties that God had assigned to them personally, and of the consequent reward each should have of his labours, was one of Arnold's most characteristic features as a trainer of youth. His hold on all his pupils, I know, perfectly astonished me. It was not so much an enthusiastic admiration for his genius, or learning, or eloquence which stirred within them; it was a sympathetic thrill, caught from a spirit that was earnestly at work in the world—whose work was healthy, sustained, and constantly carried forward in the fear of God—a work that was founded on a deep sense of its duty and its value; and was coupled with such a true humility, and such an unaffected simplicity, that others could not help being invigorated by the same feeling, and with the belief that they too in their measure could go and do likewise."—*Mr. Price's Letter in Arnold's Life*, vol. i. pp. 41, 42.

THE MOUNT OF OLIVES

AND OTHER

LECTURES ON PRAYER.

I.

THE MOUNT OF OLIVES.

"He went, as he was wont, to the Mount of Olives."—LUKE XXII. 39.

THE mountains are Nature's monuments. Like the islands, they dwell apart, and like them they give asylum from a noisy and irreverent world. In their silence many a meditative spirit has found leisure for the longest thought, and in their Patmos-like seclusion the brightest visions and largest projects have evolved; whilst, by a sort of over-mastering attraction, they have usually drawn to themselves the most memorable incidents which variegate our human history. And as they are the natural haunts of the highest spirits, and the appropriate scenes of the most signal occurrences, so they are the noblest cenotaphs. Far off they arrest the eye; and though their hoary chronicle tells its legend of the past, their heaven-pointing elevations convey the spirit onward towards eternity. We do not wonder that excited fancy has sought relics of the ark on the top of ARARAT; and in the grim solitude of SINAI, it is easy to believe and solemn to remember that the voice of Jehovah has spoken here. Elijah has made CARMEL all his own, and the death of Moses must be ever PISGAH'S diadem. The words of Jesus seem still to linger on the hills

of Galilee, their lilies forbidding "thought for raiment," and their little birds twittering "no thought for to-morrow," whilst every grassy tuft and scented flower is breathing its own beatitude. But though heavenly wisdom spake on that mountain-side, and excellent glory lighted up the top of TABOR, there is another height to which discipleship reverts with fonder memory, and which it treads with softer step—that mountain where beyond any spot in Palestine "God was manifest in FLESH,"—where the great Intercessor was wont to pray, where Jesus wept over Jerusalem, on whose slopes He blessed the Apostle-band, and sent His message of mercy to mankind—the mountain at whose base lay Bethany and Gethsemane—on whose gentle turf His feet last stood, and where they yet may stand again—the sabbatic, pensive, and expectant MOUNT OF OLIVES.

Round this Incarnation-monument let our thoughts this day revolve. To learn the mind which was in Christ, and so the mind which is in God, let us confine our view to that little spot, and ponder those scenes in the Saviour's history and those words in the Saviour's ministry of which the theatre was Olivet. And whilst we do this for purposes of general piety—to get materials for our faith and love—let us, as the best introduction to a few discourses on Prayer, keep an especial eye to the suppliant Saviour. That we may know the Intercessor above, there is no way so excellent as to get acquainted with that same Jesus while He sojourned here below.

1. Olivet reminds us of the Saviour's *pity for such as perish.* It was a pleasant evening in spring, and the Holy

Land looked happy. The rapid verdure—the bright blush of the pomegranate, and the tender scent of the budding vines—the nestling dove in her murmuring joy, and the colt and lamb in their crazy gambols—all felt the gush of vernal glee. And people felt it. It was the sunny pascal tide, and the waysides resounded with shouting pilgrims on their journey to Jerusalem. From Hermon to Zion it was one long stream of music and merry hearts, and even around the Man of Sorrows it looked like a dawn of joy. They seem at last to guess His mission and suspect His glory. They are conducting Him in triumph. They are rending down the palm-branches and cleaving the welkin with their shouts, "Hosanna to the son of David!" and proud is he on whose mantle the pacing colt of their new Monarch sets his foot. But why this solemn pause? this slackened gait, this quivering lip, this tearful eye? Jerusalem is full in sight—straight over that narrow vale, so near that you may count each stone of the glistening temple, and catch from the teeming streets this evening's tune of mingled gladness. Is it not a goodly sight? yonder gorgeous fane—the true Jehovah's sanctuary; yon crowding population, God's ancient people—and more than all, the thought of happy meetings and blessed homes on which this evening's sun will set? But the Saviour saw another crowd and heard another shout. Through the darkened noon He saw the erected cross, and round it heard the frantic mob exclaiming, "Away with him, away with him! Crucify him, crucify him! His blood be on us and our children." The Saviour saw another sight. Across the gulf of forty years He looked as clearly as then He looked

across the valley of Jehoshaphat, and saw the dismal prayer fulfilled. He saw another passover, and another multitude, and another evening like this—but saw that there should never be the like again. He beheld the Roman eagle swoop down on his quarry, and in the straitness of that siege saw things from which the piteous soul of Immanuel shrank away. He saw another sight. He saw these goodly stones all tumbled down, and barley growing in silent fields where now so many footsteps nimbly tripped it—no temple, no ephod, no priest, no passover! And oh! He saw yet another sight. He saw another world, and in its sullen gloom and endless weeping recognised many a one whose beaming face and sparkling eye lit up that evening's festival. As if already in the place of woe He looked on many round Him; and though their voices were that moment merry and shouting in His train, He knew that they would despise His blood and hate His heavenly Father, and their present mirth made Jesus weep the more. "He beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes."

Every tear that Jesus wept is a mystery, and this solemn incident in the Redeemer's history no one can entirely explain. But, my dear friends, it teaches this awful lesson —that some may share a Saviour's tears who never profit by a Saviour's blood. It shows that His pity for sinners is far beyond their pity for themselves. O Christless sinner! these tears of the Saviour speak to thee. They ask, Do you know to what a hell you are going, and what a

heaven you are losing? You may be merry now—but so was Jerusalem then—and yet its mirth made Jesus weep the more. You may be light-hearted, and you may be a favourite with your friends—and so were many of those whose ungodly souls and dark hereafter made Jesus weep. You may be in the midst of mercy and surrounded with the means of grace—and so were they; but mercy so near them and grace rejected only made the Saviour's tears flow faster. "Would that thou hadst known, in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace!" And you may have even some interest about the Saviour. Under some erroneous impression, or on a holiday triumph, you may join the jubilant company and shout Hosanna; but oh! if you despise His blood, or join the world that crucifies Him, you are one of those whose cup of wrath will only be embittered by a pitying Saviour's slighted tears. You who never come to a communion; you who have never got such faith in a dying Saviour, or such love to Him as to do this in remembrance of Him; you who do nothing to identify yourselves with the Nazarene, the Crucified; whose zeal is all expended on the road from Jericho to Jerusalem; who never follow to the guest-chamber, to Gethsemane, to the cross, to the tomb, and back into a scorning world; you who are not moved by a Saviour's blood, will you not be melted by a Saviour's tear? That tear fell from an eye which had looked into eternity, and knew the worth of souls. It fell from an eye which was not used to weep for nothing, and which must have seen something very sad before it wept at all. It fell from an eye which, O sinner! would glisten with ecstasy if it saw

thy dry lids moistening and thy dry heart melting—an eye which would sparkle in affection over thee if it saw thee weeping for thyself, and weeping for the Pierced One.

2. The Mount of Olives reminds us of the Redeemer's *agony to save.* At the foot of the mountain, and between two paths, both of which lead over the hill to Bethany, is a little enclosure called Gethsemane. To this day it contains some singularly large and very ancient olive-trees. Being on the wayside to Bethany, and at a convenient distance from the noise and interruption of Jerusalem, "Jesus ofttimes resorted thither with his disciples;" and when He crossed the brook and got in, either alone or with His little company, under the soft shelter of the olive branches, and the city gates were closed, and no footfall was heard on either path, He enjoyed "communion high and sweet" with His heavenly Father. And this holy fellowship endeared the place. It was not the dewy stillness—though that was welcome at the close of the weary day,—nor the sweet moonlight, and the gentle fall of tiny flakes from the blossoming trees, and the murmur of the brook, and the song of evening birds—though, after the rough jeering and blasphemy of men, the inarticulate music of the loyal universe was thrice welcome to the Saviour's ear; but because in that seclusion He and the Father were alone together. Intercourse such as He enjoyed while as yet in the Father's bosom He tasted there, and it so gladdened and strengthened His soul that He ofttimes resorted thither. Others would go home to sleep, but Jesus would go there to pray. Every man went, at evening, to his own place; but Jesus

"went to the Mount of Olives."[1] And, as it had been the scene of His highest delights, He selected it as the fittest place for His deepest sorrow. The Son of Man had no dwelling of His own; but Gethsemane was the Saviour's oratory. It was there that, in secret, He had so often prayed to His Father; and as the memory of blessed moments, and the sunshine of heaven opened rested on it, now that grief was near, He, as it were, entered into it and shut to the door. But oh! how changed! 'Tis no longer the same Gethsemane. All His days of flesh the Surety had been bearing His people's sin, and at all times carrying in His bosom the vial of indignation due to their sin. But it was not wrath poured out; it was wrath in a vial. Now, however, the vial burst, and His inmost soul was drenched in its burning fury. He was sore amazed. To be made "a curse" was a new thing to Immanuel. To be brought into such horrid contact with the thing which His soul hated—to be numbered with transgressors and to bear the sin of many—was a strange and appalling thing to the Holy One of God. He was sore amazed! A cup was put into His harmless hand; and, as He gazed at this cup of trembling, it was not the sharp anguish of the flesh, nor the taunts of ruffian men, nor the malignity of hideous fiends,—but it was guilt which made its dregs so bitter, and the Father's wrath which caused its flaming overflow. And though His hand was too gentle and filial to fling that cup away, separateness from sin, and the joyful sense of His Father's love were to Jesus dearer than life; and though His omnipotent hand still clasped the

[1] John vii. 53; viii. 1.

cup, His holy soul revolted from it; and in extremity of pain—in the agony of a bloody sweat—He prayed that it might pass from Him. But had *He* not drunk it, that cup must have journeyed on, and all His people, in a lost eternity, must have drunk it for themselves; and though the fainting flesh prompted Him to let it pass, and the hatred of the accursed thing, and the instinct after the Father's smile, seconded the prayer of the feeble flesh, love to man still held it fast, and love to the Father enabled Him to drink it all. And when at last, from its paroxysm of woe, he wakened up in the strengthening angel's arms, the work was well-nigh done, justice was all but satisfied, and the Church all but saved; and, for the joy so much nearer now, the cross had no terror and the sepulchre no gloom; and now that the bitterness of death was past, Judas and his torch-lit band could not come too quickly.

"Oh, what wonders love hath done!
But how little understood!
God well knows, and God alone,
What produced that sweat of blood:
Who can thy deep wonders see,
Wonderful Gethsemane!

"There my God bore all my guilt:
This through grace can be believed;
But the horrors which He felt
Are too vast to be conceived:
None can penetrate through thee,
Doleful, dark Gethsemane!"[1]

3. The Mount of Olives is identified with the supplications and intercessions of Immanuel, and so suggests to us the Lord Jesus as *the great example in prayer.* The

[1] Hart's Hymns.

supplications which ascended on those solitary nights, when of His people there were none with Him, survive in no human record: yet doubtless to the end of time our world will be indebted to the lonely hours when the Man of Sorrows watched and prayed upon the Mount of Olives. The petitions offered in Gethsemane the pen of Inspiration has preserved; and the seventeenth of John records a long and fervent prayer, offered, in all likelihood, in some calm spot near the same venerable mountain's base. In these supplications the heavenly High Priest was not only His people's Mediator and Intercessor, but their Model and their Guide. And from these we learn—

(1.) Submission in prayer. In praying for His people, the Mediator's prayer was absolute: "Father! *I will.*" But in praying for Himself, how altered was the language! "Father! if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt." "Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say? Father! save me from this hour; but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father! glorify Thy name."

(2.) Perseverance in prayer. The Evangelist[1] tells that there was one prayer which Jesus offered three times, and from the Epistle to the Hebrews we find that this prayer prevailed.[2] Although the more palpable sufferings did not pass away, the more exquisite and inward anguish, which made His soul exceeding sorrowful even unto death, did pass away. In answer to His "strong crying and tears," He was saved from this deadly and soul-crushing grief.

[1] Matt. xxvi. 44. [2] Heb. v. 7.

(3.) The best preparation for trial is habitual prayer. Long before it became the scene of His agony, Gethsemane had been the Saviour's oratory. "He ofttimes resorted thither." But when the hour of darkness came, and He trod the wine-press alone, He found that even *He* had not been there too often. And, brethren, it will be the best preparation for your own days of darkness and scenes of trial, to resort ofttimes thither in anticipatory prayer. Days of bodily weakness or sad bereavement will come abated, and the day of death will come less startling, if in prayer you have oft repaired to it beforehand, and bespoken almighty help against its time of need.

4. The Mount of Olives recalls to us the Saviour's *affection for His own.* I fear that the love of Christ is little credited even by those who have some faith in His finished work, and some attachment to His living person. There are several relations which link souls on earth together, and the affection, the instinct of endearment created by that relation is in some instances intensely strong; but, O disciple! do you believe that your Saviour's love is stronger? A brother knows how he loves his brother; but their love to one another will not explain a Saviour's love to them: for Jesus is "a friend who sticketh closer than a brother;" a friend whose love will stand severer shocks and enter into finer feelings. A mother knows how she loves the infant in her arms, how little she would grudge the hours spent in watching his feverish slumber, and the health she lost in restoring his; but that will not tell her how a Saviour loves His own. She may forget, but Jesus will not forget His ransomed. And in regard

to the most sacred of all relations, the Bible says, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify it." Not that it is possible to have the same high and self-devoting and transforming love; but the nearer approach to it the nearer a perfect affection. But though the Word of God employs these three comparisons to shadow forth the Saviour's feeling towards His own, the labouring words and disappointed metaphors leave us to infer that there is something in the heart of Immanuel towards His people—something more specific, more solicitous, more bent on their happiness and more bound up in their holiness, more tender and more transforming, than anything which the dim affections and drossy emotions of earth can rightly represent. O disciple! do you credit this? Have you not been rather wont to regard yourself as occupying in the Saviour's mind such a place as a star in the firmament, or a symbol in a formula, or a leaf in the forest, or at best a sheep in the uncounted fold? If these be your notions, go back to Olivet. Hear the Divine Intercessor at its foot exclaiming, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for all who shall hereafter believe through their word;" and hear Him promising, ere His feet sunder from its grassy slopes, "And lo! I am with you alway, even to the end of the world;" and recollect that He who prayed thus, and who promised thus, is He to whom "all power is given in heaven and in earth"—the Alpha and Omega, who is, and was, and is to come—the Almighty. Remember that in His comprehensive eye you as truly had a place as Peter and John, and in His all-sufficient

love you have a place as specific if not as large as they. You are one of those over whom He stretched His uplifted hands and pronounced His parting blessing. You are one of those to whom He has promised another Comforter, and whom He has engaged to be with alway; and though formal teaching may forget it, and your own cold heart may contradict it, if you belong to Christ at all, however much you may be prized and cherished by some around you, there is One unseen who loves you more, and who having loved you from the first will love you to the end.

Except His bodily absence, there is no alteration in the Friend of Sinners. It was ineffable love to the souls of men that brought Him to the manger, and that love was nothing less when He hasted to Jerusalem, impatient for the cross. The bloody sweat of Gethsemane did not exhaust that love—the desertion of disciples did not damp it, and the soldiers' buffeting and the rabble's shouts did not disgust it. It was love to men which, in the ransomed thief, for a moment brightened His dying hour, which gave Him breath to cry, "Father! forgive them!" and strength to bow the head and give up the ghost. Love to man was the last thing which left the heart of Jesus, and the first thing that throbbed in it when it was a living heart again. The darkness of Golgotha had not eclipsed it, nor in Joseph's sepulchre had the tomb-damp tarnished it. No sooner was He risen indeed, than this love glowed again so fervent that that resurrection evening it made two faithful hearts on their way to Emmaus burn within them; and after lighting one little company after another for forty days, in a burst

of concentrated kindness, in a blaze of final blessing, it vanished from them into heaven. And in the same manner as they saw Him go, we shall see Him come; the same mighty yet benignant Saviour, as full of grace when He returns the Man of Joys as when He first and for ever ceased to be the Man of Sorrows. And, oh! brethren, do you learn it—do you believe it! Let the Mount of Olives be your incarnation-monument. Let the road from Jericho be the record of a Saviour's pity. Let Gethsemane be the measure of a Saviour's desire for souls, and let Bethany be the token how much He loves His own; and like the men of Galilee, let the last and habitual aspect of the Saviour be that look which lingered on their memory till one by one they passed away to see Him as He is—that look which spake more love than even His melodious blessing, and which, after the cloud had closed Him from their view, made them loath to quit the Mount of Olives.

II.

THE PARTING PROMISE, AND THE PRESENT SAVIOUR.

"And, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."
MATT. XXVIII. 20.

THERE are some plants which grow right up—erect in their own sturdy self-sufficiency; and there are some feeble ones which take hold with their hands, and clasp and climb. The soul of man is like these last. Even in his best estate he was not meant to grow insulated and stand alone. He is not strong enough for that. He has not within himself resources sufficient to fill himself. He is not fit to be his own all-in-all. The make of his mind is an outgoing, exploring, petitionary make. The soul of man is a clasping, clinging soul, seeking to something over which it can spread itself, and by means of which it can support itself. And just as in a neglected garden, you may see the poor creepers making shift to sustain themselves as best they can; one convolvulus twisting round another, and both draggling on the ground; a clematis leaning on the door, which will by and by open and let the whole mass fall down; a vine or a passion-flower wreathing round a prop which all the while chafes and cuts it; so in this fallen world it is mournful to see the efforts which human souls are making to get some suffi-

cient object to lean upon and twine around. One clasps a glittering prop, and it scathes him. The love of money blasts his soul, and it hangs round its self-chosen stay a blighted, withered thing. Another spreads himself more amply over a broad surface of creature-comfort,—a snug dwelling, and a well-furnished library, and a pleasant neighbourhood, with the command of everything which heart can wish or fortune buy;—but death opens the door, and, with nothing but vacancy to lean upon, he falls over on the other side a helpless and dejected being. And a still greater number, groping about along the ground, cleave to one another, and intertwine their tendrils mutually, and by forming friendships and congenial intimacies, and close relations, try to satisfy their leaning, loving nature in this way. But it answers little end. The make of man's soul is upward, and one climber cannot lift another off the ground. And the growth of man's soul is luxuriant, and that growth must be stifled, checked, and scanty, if he have no larger space over which to diffuse his aspirations, his affections, and his efforts, than the surface of a fellow-creature's soul. But, weedy as this world-garden is, the Tree of Life still grows in the midst of it,—erect in His own omnipotent self-sufficiency, and inviting every weary, straggling soul to lay hold of His everlasting strength, and expatiate upwards along the infinite ramifications of His endless excellences and all-inviting love.

God has formed the soul of man of a leaning, dependent make; and for the healthy growth and joyful development of that soul it is essential that he should have some object far higher and nobler than himself to dispread his

desires and delights upon. That object is revealed in the Gospel. That object is Immanuel. His divinity is the Almighty prop—able to sustain the adhering soul, so that it shall never perish nor come into condemnation—the omnipotent support which bears the clinging spirit loftily and securely, so that the whirling temptations which vex it cannot rend it from the Tree of Life, and that the muddy plash, which soils and beats into the earth its sprawling neighbours, cannot tarnish the verdant serenity and limpid glories of its flowering head. And just as His Divine strength is the omnipotent prop of the adhering soul, so His Divine resources and His human sympathy make Him the all-sufficient object over which each emotion and each desire of regenerate humanity may boundlessly diffuse itself. And however delicate your feelings, however eager your affections, and however multitudinous the necessities of your intricate nature, there is that in this heavenly Friend which meets them every one. There are in His unimaginable compassions, and in His benignant fellow-feelings, holds sufficient for every craving tendril and eager clasper of the human heart, to fix upon and wreathe around.

This is what the Gospel does. It just offers you a friend, who can both save and satisfy your soul,—Jesus the Son of God, God manifest in flesh, Immanuel; the Gospel offers this Friend to you,—not more tender than He is holy, not more Divine than He is human. Instead of clutching to props which cannot elevate you, or if they do bear you up for a moment, must soon be withdrawn again,—the Gospel bids you grow against the Tree of

Life; and just as you grow up into Christ, you will grow up into holiness and into happiness. And if you have not yet found an object to your heart's content,—if you feel that there is still something wrong with you,—that you are neither leading the life which you would like to lead, nor enjoying the comfort which you think might be somehow got; be advised. Take the Lord Jesus for your friend. He is one in whom you will find no flaw. He is one of whom—if you really get acquainted with him—you will never weary; and one who, if once you really go to Him, will never weary of you. He is a friend of whom no one had ever reason to complain; a friend who, having done much for you already, designs to do for His people a great deal more; a friend who is singularly kind and considerate, for "He sticketh closer than a brother;" a friend who does not vary, "for He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever;" and, best of all, a friend who is never far away, for "Lo, I am with you alway."

My dear friends,—There are many reasons why men do not love the Lord Jesus. Some feel no need of Him. They understand that He is a Saviour; but a Saviour is what they do not desire. Others have no congeniality with Him. They understand that His character is Divine —that His love of holiness is as intense as His hatred of iniquity,—and as they love the world, and love their own way, and love the pleasures of sin, they feel that they cannot love the Lord Jesus. But the hearts of some towards Christ are cold for other reasons. Their conceptions regarding Him are sufficiently vague and dim; but so far as they can be reduced to anything definite, we

might say that they do not love the Lord Jesus, because they habitually think of Him as a dead Saviour, or a Saviour different from what He was, or a distant Saviour —a Saviour far away.

I. Some look on the Lord Jesus as dead. They read His history as of one who lived long ago, but who is not living now. They read Matthew's narrative, or John's, and they are interested—for the moment moved. They feel that these words are very beautiful—that this stroke of kindness or tenderness was very touching—that that interposition was very surprising. They feel that the whole history of Jesus of Nazareth is very affecting; and, just as they may have wept at the death of Socrates, or when they read the martyrdom of the saints at Lyons, so they may have felt for Him who had not the fox's hole—they may have wept when they saw the son of Mary hanging on the tree. And, if they were visiting Palestine, they might linger over many a silent spot with a solemn impression. "Is this the grassy mount where He preached that sermon? Yon lake, rippling round its pebbly margin, is it the one He so often crossed? and are these the very rocks which echoed the strong crying of His midnight prayers?" But there they feel as if it ended. They look on it all as a tale that is past. They take for granted that it all closed on Calvary—that the cross was the conclusion of that life—the most wonderful life that the world ever saw—but still its conclusion. To them Christ is dead, not living; and therefore no wonder that they do not love Him. You may revere the character of those long ago departed; but love is an affection reserved for

those now living. You will only love the Lord Jesus when you come to believe in Him as a living Saviour—one who once was dead, but who, once dead, dieth no more. Jesus lives. He was not more alive when He sat at Jacob's well than He is alive this moment. He was not more alive when He poured the water into the basin and washed the disciples' feet—not more alive when He took the cup and made a beginning of the Remembrance-feast—not more alive when He rose from table and sang the parting hymn and went out before them to the Mount of Olives, than He is living now. The Lord Jesus lives. He is alive for evermore.

II. Some do not love the Lord Jesus because they look on Him as an altered Saviour—as different now from what He once was. Earthly friends are apt to change, and if they do not change, they die. When a visitor comes from a foreign land where you once sojourned, you ask eagerly about the different acquaintances you once had there. "And did you see such a one?" "Yes; but you would not know him, he is so greatly altered." "Did he remember me?" "Well, I rather think he was asking for you, but I cannot be very sure. He has got other things to occupy his thoughts since you and he were wont to meet." "And what of such another?" "Ah! times are sadly changed with him. You would be sorry to see him now. I believe he has the same kind heart as ever; but he has not in his power to show it as he was used to do." "And our old neighbour, who lived next door?" "Your old neighbour! dear good man, he is safe in Abraham's bosom. I found his house shut up, and all his family

gone away." And it is very seldom, after years of absence, that you hear of one whose outward circumstances are nowise different from what they were, and rarer still to hear of one whose dispositions are quite unchanged.

However, One there is who wears our nature, but is not liable to the variations of mortality. "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." The concurring testimony of those who have seen Him from time to time, along a reach of some thousand years, goes to prove that the Alpha and Omega, the friend of sinners, cannot change. He who talked with our first parents in the cool of the day is the same holy yet condescending one that He ever was, and loveth righteousness, and hateth iniquity, as much as when the first sinners ran away from His pure and sin-repelling presence. The heavenly High Priest is still as accessible to prayer, and as ready to yield to His people's entreaty, as when He six times conceded to Abraham's intercession. The God of Bethel is still the faithful keeper of His people and their families, as when He heard Jacob in the day of his distress, and was with him in the way which he went. And anything which has been heard of Him since He went back to His glory, goes to prove that He is the same Saviour now as during the successive years He sojourned with us.

It is true, there are some circumstantial differences, but no intrinsic change. There is more of the oil of gladness on Him than when the Father first anointed Him, and crowns are on His head which have been planted there since the work given Him to do was finished. His satisfactions are fuller, as He continues to see the travail of

His soul; and, doubtless, there are outbursts of His glory yet to come, more dazzling than any which have yet astonished heaven. But still the mind of the Lord Jesus is the same as it ever was; and when the last saint sits down beside Him on His throne, when the fulness of "It is finished!" comes to be understood, and word is brought to the many mansions that death is dead, and that time is now no more—the redeemed, as they bow beneath that exceeding glory, will feel that it is still the glory of the Lamb that was slain—the glory of the friend who sticketh closer than a brother.

III. But the feelings of others towards the Lord Jesus are vague and comfortless, because they think of Him as a distant Saviour—a Saviour far away. The Lord Jesus is omnipresent. He is not far from any one of us. His flame-bright eye follows the Sabbath-breaker through the fields, and is on the drunkard as he reels into the tavern. It reads the thought of the liar as he forgets his falsehood, and looks through and through that heart which is full of its corrupt imaginings. It notices the worldly professor at the communion-table, and sees the unbeliever tumbling, night after night, into his prayerless bed. But though the Lord Jesus be everywhere present, He is present with His own people in a peculiar relation. He is with them as a Saviour, a shepherd, a friend. His Divine presence fills immensity; but His gracious and reconciled presence —His loving and interested presence—His Saviour-presence—is exclusively with His own. So constantly is the Lord Jesus present with His people, that, in order to get the full good of it, they have only to remember the fact.

From the moment that a man becomes a disciple of Christ, "Lo, I am with you alway" becomes a promise to that man—a promise, the performance of which is never for a moment suspended by the Saviour, but the existence of which is often forgot by the disciple. But, forgotten or remembered, it is every moment true; and to enjoy the full blessedness of this assurance, you have only to remember and realize it. Sometimes, without any effort on your part, the conviction will dawn gently, or flash brightly on the mind, and you will feel for a moment that Jesus is with you. But why not feel it always? for it is always equally true.

"A glance from heaven with sweet effect,
Sometimes my pensive spirit cheers;
But ere I can my thoughts collect,
As suddenly it disappears.

"So lightning in the gloom of night,
Affords a momentary day;
Disclosing objects full in sight,
Which, soon as seen, are snatch'd away.

"The lightning's flash did not create
The opening prospect it reveal'd;
But only show'd the real state
Of what the darkness had conceal'd."[1]

These lightning-bursts, these momentary gleams, are just the hints of truth which the Holy Spirit darts into the mind from time to time, revealing matters as they really are. But we ought to recollect, that even during the dark the solid landscape has not vanished, but is only hid. And even so, when Christ's sensible presence is withdrawn, we should remember that He is near as ever,

[1] Newton.

and it is the believer's wisdom to go constantly on in the joyful strength of the assurance, "Lo, I am with you!"

Let me mention some benefits of Christ's perpetual presence with His people, especially when that presence is recollected and realized.

1. It is sanctifying. The company of an earthly friend is often influential on character. If he be one of a very pure and lofty mind, and, withal, one who has gained an ascendency over your own soul, his very presence is a talisman. If an angry storm be gathering in your bosom or lowering in your countenance, the unexpected sunshine of his heavenly aspect will disperse it all again. If mean or unworthy thoughts are creeping into your mind, the interruption of his noble presence will chase them all away. If you are on the point of declining some difficult enterprise, or evading some incumbent duty, the glance of his remonstrating eye will at once shame away your indolence or cowardice, and make you up and doing. So the Saviour's recollected presence is a constant reproof and a ceaseless incentive to an affectionate disciple. Is he provoked? Is his temper ruffled? Is he about to come out with some sharp or cutting sarcasm, or to deal the indignant blow? One look from the Lamb of God will calm his spirit—will cool the flush of fury in his burning cheek—will make his swelling heart beat softly again. Are you tempted? Do evil thoughts arise in your heart? One glance from these holy eyes can chase away a whole legion of devils, and banish back into the pit each foul suggestion. Are you seized with a lazy or selfish fit? Are you wearying of work which for some time you were

doing, or refusing work which God is now giving you to do? Are you angry at an affliction, or averse to a given task? Lo! He puts to His hand, and offers to help you with this cross, and you observe that it is a pierced hand; and He offers to go before and show you the way, and you notice that the footprints are bleeding, and it wounds you to think that you should have needed such an admonition. Or you have just come away from a scene of guilt—from a company where you have denied Him—where you have just been saying by your conduct, by your silence, or your words, "I know not the man;" and as you encounter the eye of Jesus, whom they are leading away to crucify, O Peter! do you not go forth and weep bitterly?

2. Christ's presence is sustaining. The apostles were wonderfully calm and collected men. People, considering that they were, many of them, unlearned and ignorant, were amazed at their dignified composure in most difficult circumstances. It was scarcely possible to alarm or agitate them. When brought before kings and rulers, it was usually their judges who trembled, but they themselves were tranquil. And Paul tells us the secret of it. When he himself was brought before Cæsar, it was an agitating occasion. Nero was a cruel prince, and the people looked on his palace much as they would have looked on a leopard's den. An order has arrived to bring the Galilean prisoner to the emperor's judgment-hall. The apostle had just time to warn a few friends, and like enough they came and condoled with him; but they thought it prudent not to go with him into court. It might compromise their

own safety, and it could do him no effectual good;—and he did not urge them. The soldiers arrived, and he went away cheerily with them—the old weather-beaten man—without his cloak, for he had left it at Troas; without his friends, for he had left them behind at his own hired house—as forlorn as ever prisoner stood before Cæsar. And how was it that the infirm old man passed, with so serene a look, the clashing swords and scowling sentries at the palace front? How was it that he trod the gloomy gateway with a step so full of majestic innocence and martyr-zeal, and never noticed Nero's lions snuffing and howling in their hungry den? And how was it that in the dim and dangerous presence-chamber, where cruelty sat upon the throne of luxury,—how was it that, with that wolf upon the judgment-seat and those blood-hounds all around him—with none but Pagans present, and not one believing friend to bear thee company—how was it, O Paul! that in such an hour of peril, instead of pleading not guilty, and falling down on suppliant knees, thou didst commit the very crime they charged against thee—the crime of loyalty to Jesus—and urge Christ's claims on Cæsar? Why, the secret of this strange courage was, "At my first answer no man stood with me, but all forsook me. Notwithstanding, THE LORD stood with me and strengthened me, that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear; and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion."

And you, my friends, will all be brought into agitating circumstances. It is not likely that it will be said to you, 'Fear not, for thou must stand before Cæsar." But you

may be arraigned before terrible tribunals—the tribunal of public opinion—the tribunal of private affection—the tribunal of worldly interest—for Christ's name's sake. From time to time you may be constrained to pass through ordeals which will make you understand how Paul felt when passing in at the palace-gate. When called to give your testimony for Christ, the flesh may be weak, and the willing word may be like to expire in your choking utterance. Worldly wisdom may beckon you back, and, like Paul's fearful friends, cautious or carnal Christians may refuse to support you. It is not Nero's hall, but a quiet parlour you are entering; but before you come out again, you may be a poor man, or a friendless one. The *Yes* or *No* of one faithful moment may have spurned the ladder of promotion from under your feet, and dashed your brightest hopes on this side the grave. Or, by the time the letter you are now penning is closed and sealed and posted, and the sinful assent, or the compromising proposal, or the resolute refusal, is written, the Lord Jesus shall have said, "I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead;" or, "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot;" or, "I know thy works; behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it; for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name. I also will keep thee." In such fiery trials of love and fidelity, there is nothing so sure to overcome as His recollected presence, who says, "Lo, I am with you." And oh! it is sweeter, like the three holy children, to pace up and down beneath the furnace's flaming vault, arm in arm with the Son of man, than to tread the green

pastures of an earthly promotion, or a carnal tranquillity purchased by the denial of Jesus, and so with the wrath of the Lamb.

3. Comforting. You have noticed the difference in travelling the same road solitary and in pleasant company. "What! we are not here already! It takes three hours to do it, and we have not been half that time. Well, I could not have believed it; but then I never before travelled it with you." No doubt Cleopas and his comrade used to think the road from Jerusalem to Emmaus long enough, and were very glad when they reached the fiftieth furlong. But that evening, when the Stranger from Jerusalem joined them, they grudged every waymark which they passed; and as, in the progress of His expositions, Moses and all the prophets beamed with light from heaven, and their own hearts glowed warmer and warmer, they would fain have counted the mile-stones back again. "How vexing! This is Emmaus; but you must not go on. 'Abide with us, for the day is far spent.'" Any road which you travel solitary is long enough, and any stage of life's journey where no one is with you will be dreary and desolate. But you need have no such companionless stages—no such cheerless journeys. If you be a disciple, the Lord Jesus always is with you. And whether they be the silent weeks which you spend in search of health in some far-away and strange-looking place, or the long voyage in the sea-roaming ship, or the shorter journey in the rattling stage or railway car,—if, in reading, or musing, or lifting up your heart, you can realize that Saviour's presence, who is about your path, and compasses all your ways, you will be almost sorry when such a journey is

ended, and when *such* a solitude is exchanged for more wonted society. I can almost believe that John Bunyan left Bedford jail with a sort of trembling, fearing that he might never find again such a Bethel as he had found in that narrow cell for the last twelve years; and I can understand how Samuel Rutherford wrote from his place of banishment, "Christ hath met me in Aberdeen, and my adversaries have sent me here to be feasted with His love. I would not have believed that there was so much in Jesus as there is. But 'Come and see,' maketh Christ be known in His excellency and glory."

The presence of Christ can turn a dark night into a night much to be remembered. Perhaps it is time to be sleeping, but the November wind is out, and as it riots over the misty hills, and dashes the rain-drift on the rattling casement, and howls like a spirit distracted in the fireless chimney, it has awakened the young sleeper in the upper room; and when his mother enters, she finds him sobbing out his infant fears, or with beating heart hiding from the noisy danger in the depths of his downy pillow. But she puts the candle on the table, and sits down beside the bed; and as he hears her assuring voice, and espies the gay comfort in her smiling face, and as she puts her hand over his, the tear stands still upon his cheek till it gets time to dry; and the smoothing down of the panic furrows on his brow, and the brightening of his eye, announce that he is ready for whatever a mother has got to tell. And as she goes on to explain the mysterious sources of his terror—"That hoarse loud roaring is the brook tumbling over the stones; for the long pouring rains have filled it to the very brim. It is up on the

green to-night, and had the cowslips been in blossom they would all have been drowned. Yes—and that thump on the window. It is the old cedar at the corner of the house, and as the wind tosses his stiff branches, they bounce and scratch on the panes of glass; and if they were not very small, they would be broken in pieces." And then she goes on to tell how this very night there are people out in the pelting blast, while her little boy lies warm in his crib, inside of his curtains; and how ships may be upset on the deep sea, or dashed to pieces on rocks so steep that the drowning sailors cannot climb them. And then perhaps she ends it all with breathing a mother's prayer, or he drops asleep beneath the cradle-hymn.

And why describe all this? Because there is so much practical divinity in it. In the history of a child, a night like this is an important night, for it has done three things. It has explained some things which, unexplained, would have been a source of constant alarm—perhaps the germ of superstition or insanity. It has taught some precious lessons—sympathy for sufferers, gratitude for mercies, and perhaps some pleasant thought of Him who is the hiding-place from the storm and the covert from the tempest. And then it has deepened in that tender bosom the foundations of filial piety, and helped to give that parent such hold and purchase on a filial heart as few wise mothers have ever failed to win, and no manly son has ever blushed to own.

Then for the parallel. "As one whom his mother comforteth, so the Lord comforteth His people." It is in the dark and boisterous night of sorrow or apprehension

that the Saviour reveals Himself nigh. And one of the first things He does is to explain the subject-matter of the grief—to show its real nature and amount. "It is but a light affliction. It lasts but for a moment. It is a false alarm. It is only the rain-drift on the window—wait till the day dawns and shadows flee away. Wait till morning, and you will see the whole extent of it." And then the next thing that He does is to teach some useful lesson. And during those quiet hours, when the heart is soft, the Saviour's lessons sink deep. And last of all, besides consolation under the trial and peaceful fruits that follow it, by this comforting visit, the Saviour unspeakably endears himself to that soul. Paul and Silas never knew Christ so well, nor loved Him so much, as after that night which He and they passed together in the Macedonian prison. And the souls on which the Lord Jesus has taken the deepest hold, are those whose great tribulations have thrown them most frequently and most entirely into His own society.

But we hasten to a close. We have seen the meaning of the words so far—Lo, I am with you alway; I am with you to succour in temptation, to strengthen in duty, to guide in perplexity, to comfort in sorrow. From the instant you become a disciple, I am with you all along. I am with you every day. All your life I am with you —and at death?—at death you are with Me. That's the difference. At present I am always with you, but you are not always with me. At present Jesus is constantly near His own, but His own do not constantly desire to be near Him. Here it is only by faith that believers enjoy

His presence. There they shall see Him as He is. Now the Lord Jesus follows His own whithersoever they go, but they do not always follow Him. Then it will be different, for they will follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. And all that is wanting to complete the promise is what death's twinkling will supply. Now it is, "Lo, I am with you alway,"—and then it is, "And so shall *we* be ever with the Lord."

"Ever with the Lord." At once and for ever. At once—for absent from the body, we are present with Him. So near is Jesus now, that, like the infant waking from its dream, it looks up, and lo! she sits beside it—waking up from this life-dream, the first sight is Jesus as He is. At once—no flight through immensity—no pilgrimage of the spheres—for the everlasting arms are the first resting-place of the disembodied soul—it will be in the bosom of Immanuel that the emancipated spirit will inquire, "Where am I?" and read in the face of Jesus the answer, "For ever with the Lord." For ever! To be with Him for a few years, as one way with another John and Peter were—to be with Him one Lord's day, as the beloved disciple subsequently was—to be with him a few moments, as Paul caught up into the third heavens was—how blessed! But to be ever with the Lord—not only to-day, but to-morrow—nay, neither to-day nor to-morrow, but now, now, now—one everlasting now!

> "For ever with the Lord!
> Amen! so let it be;
> Life from the dead is in that word—
> 'Tis immortality."

III.

THE HEARER OF PRAYER.

"O thou that hearest prayer!"—PSALM lxv. 2.

THE only proper object of worship is God—the living and true God—Triune Jehovah, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. According to the nature of the blessings implored or the mercies acknowledged, we have instances of prayer addressed to all the Persons of the blessed Godhead; but the tenor of Scripture shows that in the economy of grace, prayer is usually addressed to the Father through the Son, and by the Holy Ghost. God in Christ is the object of Christian worship, and the author of that worship is the Holy Spirit, as the Spirit of Christ.

I. God is the hearer of prayer.

There is no need to speculate as to the efficacy of prayer. It is a subject on which we have conclusive information; for we have the assurance of God himself. "The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers." "Delight thyself in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart." "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass." "Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will answer thee." And lest we should

desire more definite information, we have it. "No man hath seen God at any time: the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." There was once amongst us One who knew precisely the reception which prayers are wont to meet with in the Court of Heaven. There was once on earth One who could testify, on this matter, what He had seen, and who could tell distinctly whether the prayers of earth are audible in the upper sanctuary, and how far the High and Holy One is disposed to regard and answer them; and nothing can be more encouraging than the language of this Faithful Witness. "When thou prayest, enter into thy closet; and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father who is in secret; and thy Father who seeth in secret shall reward thee openly." "I say unto you that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father who is in heaven." "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son." "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened."

So conclusive are these and similar declarations, that no further warrant should be needful to give precision and hopeful earnestness to our petitions. We have the living God himself assuring us that He is prepared to accept, and consider, and answer them; and we have the Son of God himself come down from the bosom of the Father, the appointed medium of communication betwixt

heaven and earth—we have the Intercessor himself declaring, that no petition passes through His hand but it brings back its blessing; and further assurances than these should scarcely be needful to make the man who is conscious of sincerity in prayer, secure of an answer. But further assurance is given. We know of instances almost unnumbered where prayer has obtained an actual answer. In the lives of Abraham and Abraham's servant, of Lot, of Jacob, of Moses, Joshua, Gideon, Manoah, and Samson, of Hannah and of Samuel, of David the king and Solomon his son, Hezekiah and Manasseh, of the prophets Elijah, Elisha, Jeremiah, Daniel, and Ezekiel; then, again, in the history of the apostles and the early Church, we have abundant evidence that, whatever may have become of our own, others have directed prevailing supplications to the heavenly Majesty, and that singular mercies have been from time to time bestowed in answer to believing prayer.

And here you would not wonder though we should close the case. Having God's promise and the Saviour's assurance of the prevalency of prayer, and having, both in the sacred narrative and later histories, so many cases recorded of accepted and answered supplications, there is enough to justify the conclusion, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint. But there is an evidence, to most minds more satisfactory than the most harmonious testimony—I mean, the evidence of personal consciousness—the proof they have from their own experience. There have been persons who possessed this proof; and I believe almost every Christian could make, at some stage of his progress, the same entry as John Newton wrote in

his journal,[1] "About this time I began to know that there is a God who hears and answers prayer." We believe that to most real Christians here present the discussion of the question will be superfluous, and, so far as they are personally concerned, uninteresting; for their short argument in favour of the practice, and their conclusive answer to all objections, is the Psalmist's own :—"But verily God hath heard me; he hath attended to the voice of my prayer." The efficacy of prayer is with them no longer a matter of probability or a subject for reasoning. It is now a matter of fact—an ascertained and positive truth—a truth not even of others' testimony, but a fact of their own consciousness. And so, brethren, if you wish to have your minds set conclusively at rest on the subject, like the Psalmist, pray—pray till, like the Psalmist, you can sing —"I love the Lord, because he hath heard my voice and my supplications. Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live."

And now, having put on its proper footing, as a matter of fact, the truth that God is the hearer of prayer, the speculative difficulties with which some have perplexed the subject need give us no pain. If the truth be *ascertained*, and the mind of the man who has discovered it be sound and vigorous, no difficulties will disturb his faith. To use the words of a clear thinker,[2]—"Before a confessed and unconquerable difficulty, the mind, if in a healthy state, reposes as quietly as when in possession of a discovered truth—as quietly and contentedly as we are

[1] Quoted in M'Gill on *Closet Prayer.*

[2] Arnold's *Sermons on the Interpretation of Scripture*, p. 147.

accustomed to bear that law of our nature which denies us the power of seeing through all space, or of being exempt from sickness and decay." Allow that some serious objections could be started against the efficacy of prayer, these objections do not touch the evidence on which we believe that God has promised to hear prayer, nor that other evidence on which we believe that He has actually heard and answered it. The greatness of creation and the littleness of man, the decrees of God and the immutability of natural laws, would not stop his prayer, nor startle from his knees the man who could say, "Verily, God hath heard me: he hath attended to the voice of my petition;" but superior to all speculative difficulties, because secure in his experimental knowledge, that wise and happy man would still pray on. And to see the wisdom of this course you have only to put a parallel case. In the infinite variety of this universe, there may be a world where the processes of growth and decay and reproduction, so familiar to us, are utterly unknown. Suppose that the inhabitant of such a world were transported to our own, and that he witnessed the husbandman's operations in spring. He might marvel what he meant. He might wonder why he cast these grains of corn into the ground; and, when told that it was with a view to reproduce them a hundred-fold, the mysterious process might at once assume the aspect of infatuation, and he might begin to remonstrate with the labourer on this crazy waste of useful corn; and, if this visitor from Jupiter or Saturn were as acute a metaphysician as many in our own world are, he might adduce many subtle argu-

ments—too subtle, perhaps, for a farmer to refute. "Is not this a mad notion of yours? Do you really mean to affirm that this particle of corn will grow into a hundred more? Nay, do you pretend to say that you will put into that hole this hard and husky atom, and come back in three months and find it changed into the glossy stems, the waving leaves, and rustling ears, of the tall wheat-stalk? What resemblance, or what adequacy, is there between that seed and a sheaf of corn? Besides, if a buried grain is to grow up a hundred-fold, why don't you bury diamonds and guineas, and get them multiplied after the same proportion? Besides, O simpleton! do you not know that all these matters have been fixed and settled from everlasting? It has been fore-ordained, either that you are to have a crop next autumn, or that you are to have none. In the former case, your present pains are needless, for you will get your harvest without all this ado. In the latter, your pains are useless, for nothing will procure you a crop where it is not the purpose of Omnipotence that you should have one." Did the ploughman listen to all this remonstrance, he might be much perplexed with it. He might not be able to show the precise way in which seeds exert an efficacy on the future crop; and he might not see at once the reason why corn-grains should be reproductive, whilst diamonds and guineas are not; and least of all might he be able to dispose of the fatalist objection. But he would deem it enough to refute all this mystification to say—that he had never known a harvest without a seed-time, and that he had never sown sufficiently without reaping something. And so, when a man

comes in from the prayerless world, and starts his objections, a praying man may not be able to discuss them one by one—he may not even understand them—" but this I know, God is the hearer of prayer, and verily he hath heard myself." And, like the farmer, who scatters his seed heedless of all that has ever been said on necessity, and causation, and general laws, a wise believer will, in the face of hypothetic difficulties, proceed on ascertained facts, and, amidst objections and cavils, will persist to pray, and continue to enjoy the blessings which prayer procures.

Though hitherto I have not touched these theoretic difficulties, I may now, in conclusion, mention three simple truths, in whose successive light every doubt and difficulty should melt away. God is the hearer of prayer,—

1. Because He is the Living God.
2. Because He is Almighty.
3. And because He is the God of Love.

1. Jehovah is the Living God. " The tendency of many minds is to regard the Deity as a principle rather than as a person."[1] They look upon Him as a power—a presence —a principle—the most general of general laws—not as the great I AM, the Living God. No wonder that they have little heart to pray. If Elijah had known no other deity than the little cloud, or the sea from which it ascended, or the sky in which it floated, or the electric action which condensed more and more dark vapour round it, he would scarcely have renewed his supplication seven times. But he addressed himself not to clouds, but to the Living God of Israel. When I go to my friend's house to procure some

[1] Chalmers's *Natural Theology*, vol. ii. p. 315.

favour from him, I do not speak to his books or his furniture—I do not invoke his genius or guardian spirit; I do not apostrophize the abstract idea of benevolence, or virtue, or friendship; but I speak direct to himself: a lowly friend, it may be, or an unworthy suppliant, but still, a living man, I address a living person. Prayer is not an appeal to dead matter or to general laws. It is not a request to the rain to fall or to the sun to stand still. It is not imploring the principle of gravitation to relax its rule on my behalf, and disengage my feet from the earth, nor is it a beseeching the fire to forbear and not burn me. It is not to supplicate such virtues as meekness and patience and fortitude to come down and take up their abode in my bosom. But when I pray, I address myself to that Living God who has the elements of nature under His control, and, what is to me, as an immortal and accountable being, far more important, who has at His disposal infinite resources for making His creatures holy. He is the *Living* God; and if, in asking mercies from Him, I may not be as sanguine as a friend when he entreats a friend, or a child when he importunes a father, I may at least be as earnest and urgent as a subject is when he has opportunity to ply his suit with his living sovereign.

2. But some who restrain prayer do err from not knowing the power of God. They feel as if it were impossible even for Omniscience to attend to every suppliant, and beyond the power even of Omnipotence to bestow a separate boon in answer to each petition. Or they feel as if they were only the more important requests of the more eminent suitors that are likely to be noticed and conceded. But

what is Omnipotence? Is it not the power of attending to all things undistracted, as well as of doing the mightiest things unexhausted? The Almighty—is He not able to attend to all the wants of all His creatures? Is there in creation aught that would lead us to suppose that to His comprehensive eye any grandeur is imposing, or any minuteness despicable? Did He only create the suns and larger planets, and leave it to moons and little worlds to create themselves? Or, coming down to this lower world, did He bestow a higher finish on the bulkier existences, and show little care for the lesser and lower? Was he rejoicing in the greatness of His strength when He formed the oak and the lion, and had His arm grown weary when it reached the lily and the nightingale? Though there were no Bible to proclaim it, there is evidence enough—whether we look up into the heavens with their circling worlds, or down into a drop of water with its myriads of gay darting monads—proof enough that He who *made* the whole of such a universe is able to *attend* to it all. There is proof enough that no multitude of suppliants can distract Him, and no magnitude of their requests exhaust Him. There is proof enough that if any prayer be unanswered, it is not because the suitor is insignificant, nor because he has asked too great a blessing.

3. And others err, forgetting God's goodness. True, Jehovah may be the Living God, and a God of boundless power; but what if He be a hard master or an angry king? What if we ourselves have put Him in an attitude of estrangement, and the same breath which addresses Him in the language of entreaty, what if it has previously

assailed the High and Holy One in tones of hostility? Here does come in a difficulty on which conjecture could only throw a more perplexing light. The hearer of prayer, is He not also the hater of sin? And coming into His presence, instead of procuring blessings, may I not be provoking a more swift displeasure? Here is indeed a difficulty—the gloomier alternative of which our own guilty consciences too severely favour, and from which we should have found no sure escape, had not the heavenly High Priest, reposing in the Father's love, and holding out to His guilty brethren His hand of mediation, said, "After this manner pray ye, '*Our Father*, which art in heaven.'" "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son."

IV.

THE INTERCESSOR ABOVE: THE PROMPTER WITHIN.

"Jesus is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."—HEB. vii. 25.

"The Spirit helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered."—ROM. viii. 26.

NOTHING shows so strongly that God is willing to hear and answer prayer as the provision He has made for its acceptable and effectual presentation. However worthless the suppliant, he may present his petition in the name of God's beloved Son; and however dim his ideas and powerless his expressions, he may obtain, as the instigator of his desire and the guide of his devotion, none other than the Spirit of God. The first text assures us that in every instance where prayer is offered in Jesus' name, He maketh intercession with the Father.

Jesus sits on the Father's right hand, and there He intercedes for His people. This is just the sequel and continuation of Redemption. Just as God's Providence is the preserving of His creation once He has formed it, so Christ's intercession is the preserving of His Church now that He has bought it. The Mediator's presence within the veil secures the perseverance of His people till they too be within it. For Christ maketh intercession for us.

He sees some Peter at this moment about to be sifted as wheat, and He prays that his faith fail not. He sees a child of light walking in darkness, or some forlorn disciple like to faint by the way, and He prays the Father, and He sends the Comforter. He sees a band of sore-tempted disciples. He espies a Lot in Sodom, or a Daniel in the den—a Joseph in Egypt, or a saint in Sardis, and He says, "Holy Father! keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me. Keep them from the evil." He sees a believer waxing formal and cold, restraining prayer and disrelishing the Word; and He says, "Sanctify them through thy truth;" and then the sickness comes which drives him back to the throne of grace, or the sorrow which sends him to the Word again; and, finding out a multitude of undetected sins and lacking graces, the believer is sanctified anew. And oh! He rises eagerly from His royal seat; for yonder is a believer dying: He "stands"[1] up at the right hand of God, for a Stephen is about to fall on sleep, and the Intercessor cries, "Father! I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory." The Father wills, and the Lord Jesus receives that spirit.

But although, so to speak, on the part of God, "all things are ready;" though He sits on His throne of grace, and though the Mediator waits with His golden censer to receive and then to offer up the prayers of sinners here on earth—all things are not ready on the part of the sinner. Diffidence God-ward, dimness of perception, coldness of desire, perversity of will, and distraction of spirit, are all so

[1] Acts vii. 56.

many "infirmities" under which each petitioner labours; and it is for the "help" of these "infirmities" that the God of grace has provided not only an Advocate above but a Prompter within. Happily for us, we are able to add that the Holy Spirit guides the thoughts and instigates the desires—He helps the infirmities of believers when they pray.

1. Guilt on the conscience is one great hindrance to prayer. When sin is recent—when, like Adam skulking among the trees, the bitter-sweet of the forbidden fruit is still present to his taste, and his newly-opened eyes are aghast at his own deformity—it is not natural for the self-condemned transgressor to draw near to God. And it is not till the Spirit of God directs his view to the unnoticed sacrifice, and encourages him to put on the robe of God's providing, that the abashed and trembling criminal can venture back into God's presence. And it is not till the Spirit of God comes forth into his soul, and begins to cry "Abba" there, that the soul goes forth with alacrity to meet a reconciled God. To reveal the great High Priest, the daysman betwixt Infinite Holiness and human vileness—to open heaven and display Jesus standing at the right hand of God—to impart confidence in the finished work, and so, amidst abounding guilt, to give hope to prayer—is His work who, when He is come, convinces not only of sin, but of righteousness.

2. Another great hindrance to prayer is dimness of spiritual perception. When a man of taste or science climbs a mountain in a bright, transparent day, he rejoices in its goodly prospect or curious spoils; but his dog feels

no interest in them. He sees the philosopher peering through his telescope, or exploring for the little plants that grow near the summit, or splintering the rocks and putting fragments in the bag; but it never occurs to the spaniel so much as to marvel what his master is finding there. He sits yawning and panting on a sunny knoll, or snaps at the mountain-bee as it comes sailing past him, or chases the conies back into their holes, and scampers down, with noisy glee, as soon as the hungry sojourn is ended. The disparity between the philosopher and his irrational friend is hardly greater than it is between the believer and the worldling when you bring them together into the domain of faith. "The natural man perceiveth not the things of the Spirit of God;" and on the Pisgah of the same revelation whence the believer descries a goodly land, and where he is making the most interesting discoveries, the other sees nothing to arrest his attention. The Word of God and its promises—the throne of grace and its privileges—the things of faith in all their varieties —have no existence to worldly men. And when constrained to bear others company in outward ordinances, they are thankful when the prayer concluded or the sanctuary closing sends them back to the world again. But just as the same lover of nature might ascend his favourite eminence on a subsequent day, and find all his goodly prospects intercepted by a baffling mist, so dense that, except a pebble here and there, he can alight on none of its rare productions, and without any opening vista by which he can catch a glimpse of the fair regions around; so the believer may ascend the hill of God—he

may open his Bible or enter his closet—and find, alas! that it is a foggy day, the beauteous panorama blotted out, and himself left to grope chillily in the cold and perplexing gloom. But, like a gale of summer wind upspringing and lifting all the fog from the mountain-top, the breath of the Omnipotent Spirit can scatter every cloud, and leave the soul on a pinnacle of widest survey, rejoicing in the purest light of God.

3. A third infirmity of the saints, and a great hindrance to prayer, is the feebleness of affection God-ward. Human affection is an intermitting spring. Even though the hidden streams which feed it should be always flowing, it is only now and then, when the fountain is filled up to the brim, that there is a momentary overflow. There may be a very deep attachment between the members of a family, and yet it is only on some casual occasion—the day of their reunion after long separation, or the eve of parting, or one of those propitious seasons when people realize how happy is their lot—that the fountain overflows, and they give utterance to their irrepressible emotions. But owing to this deficiency of ardour—this infrequency in their fits of fervent affection—it comes to pass that the members of a harmonious family will be much together, and yet not take full advantage of their opportunities of mutual intercourse, nor grow remarkable in mutual acquaintance or mutual endearment. This infirmity of human affection extends into the realm of faith. There is a real affection on the part of the believer towards his Father in heaven; but it is often latent—often languid—not always welling up and flowing over—and it often

requires some special incident of mercy or of judgment to swell it up to that point which makes himself conscious of its presence. Just as separations, threatened or actual, bring out the love of friends to one another, so a decree, like that of Darius interdicting prayer, or a flight, like that of David from the house of God to the land of Jordan, brings out the believer's love to his heavenly Father—reveals it to himself. And just as sudden acts of kindness surprise former friends into a fonder and more outspoken affection, so the unlooked-for arrival of some astounding mercy will startle the believer into such thankfulness or self-abasement as will transport him instantly to the throne of grace. But, even apart from any present visitation of judgment or mercy, there are influences which will, from time to time, surcharge the believing soul with gratitude, or adoration, or earnestness after God; and, just as in life's daily tenor there are auspicious moments when memory or an open eye discloses, in all the zest of novelty, the excellence of a familiar friend, so there are genial hours in the believer's history, when the Spirit, the Enlightener and Remembrancer, brings to view such attractions in that all-sufficient Friend whom we so readily forget, that the enraptured soul looks on and wonders, and desires no greater blessedness. Reverting to our original emblem: as the intermitting fountain takes a long interval to fill it in a dry and sultry season, but fills the faster and overflows the oftener as the mountain is bathed in abundant dews, and may at last, amidst the plenteous rain, become a constant stream; so, as the believer's heart is filled with more rapid love and joy by the Spirit's plentiful down-

pouring, the rare and intermitting spring of supplication flows more frequently, till anon it becomes—not a daily, but—a constant emanation, and that full-souled and heaven-replenished saint has learned to "pray without ceasing."

4. Another infirmity of the saints is a disposition to ask wrong things. We know not what to pray for as we ought. The blessings for which it is most natural to pray are those which we least need—temporal mercies. There are often an urgency and importunity for these strangely disproportioned to the earnestness with which we beg the better gifts. Sometimes the believer prays the Lord that the thorn in the flesh may depart from him, far more eagerly than he asks that sufficient grace which will make the thorn no longer painful, or even will enable him to glory in infirmity. Again, amongst spiritual mercies, believers do not always covet most earnestly the best gifts, or the gifts which in their circumstances would be best for them. It was good for Peter and James and John to be on the holy mount, and they prayed to tarry there. But it was good for the world, and eventually good for themselves, that they were obliged to come down. It is natural for believers to covet rapture and elevation more intensely than hard labour and hazardous testimonies for Jesus and a toilsome pilgrimage through a hostile world; but for both themselves and that world, it is better that they should go down to active service—remembering, however, as they go, what they heard and saw when they were with Jesus on the mount.

But the Holy Spirit knows the actual state of each. He

knows what spiritual blessings the suppliant really needs, and what temporal mercies it would be no eventual blessing for him to attain. If it be a dangerous temporal good, He can wean the soul from the vehement desire of it; or by exhibiting some surpassing heavenly good, can awaken such longings after *that* as will make the other be forgotten; or by simply reconciling the soul to the adorable will of God, can make it content to merge its own instinctive longings in His majestic sovereignty. Then again He can so reveal to the soul its actual necessities, that praying time will not be expended in imploring undesired mercies, or confessing unfelt deficiency. He knows the things which accord with the will of God, and teaches the petitioner to ask those blessings in asking which He can plead God's precept or God's promise.

5. A fifth infirmity of the saints is that, even when asking right things, they do not ask in a manner agreeable to the will of God. Some are haunted by worldly and frivolous thoughts in prayer, and feel as if their minds were never so silly and trifling, so earthly and carnal, as when they attempt to pray. It would seem as if all the vanities of the week came crowding into their minds, as if on signal given, the moment they went upon their knees; and petitions for the most stupendous blessings will be ascending, without force or meaning, through a swarm of idle fancies and vagrant thoughts. Or perhaps, amidst greater composure of spirit, there may be little or no longing after the blessing asked. The suppliant begs it, not so much because he appreciates or desires it, as because he thinks it dutiful to make mention of it; and after a

formal enumeration of unsought mercies, he goes his way, without having actually lodged one prevailing request, one effectual fervent prayer, before the throne of grace. Or perhaps, amidst considerable earnestness and urgency, the believer is embarrassed and distressed by the unsuitableness of his thoughts—his mean conceptions of those unspeakable benefits for which he is entreating, and his unworthy thoughts of that God with whom he has to do. Now, for all these distractions in sacred duties, the remedy lies with the Spirit Himself. We can shut to the door; but He can shut the heart and lock out the world and all its phantoms. We can open the Bible and look at the promises; but He can open heaven and show each promise in its glorious fulfilment. We can lift our eyes towards the hills; but He can show us "Him who is invisible," and can enable our souls to rest on Him with the sweetest security for the accomplishment of all that He has spoken. We can task ourselves to stated times of devotion, and resolve that we shall spend a given space in prayer; but He can so enlarge the heart—He can make the spirit so strong in the Lord and in the power of His might—He can fill the mind with such longings after angelic purity—such delight in heavenly things—such vehement aspirations after God; He can intercede within us with those yearnings and groanings which cannot be uttered, so that hours and minutes shall not be counted, and the untiring soul shall continue "instant in prayer."

V.

THE PRIVILEGE OF PRAYER.

"Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing."—1 THESS. v. 16, 17.

"THE Athenians spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell or to hear some new thing;" and whatever may have become of the Attic elegance and the Attic genius, modern society is not deficient in the Athenian curiosity. Nor do we blame it. The desire of novelty is not in itself blameworthy; but there is one form of it which we would like to see more frequent. To *freshen* old truths is nearly as important as to discover new ones: and instead of telling or hearing some new thing, our time would often be as advantageously occupied in thinking over and brightening up the meaning of some *old* thing.

Few expressions in theology are older than that which speaks of the "privilege of prayer;" but nothing could be a greater novelty in the history of some who now hear me, than to find prayer an actual privilege. Am I wrong? "The privilege of prayer!" Do not some feel that the *burden* of prayer—the *obligation*, the *duty*, would be a truer name for it? Do not some of you feel, that to call it a *privilege* is just to give a pleasant name to an irksome thing? If so, instead of acquainting you with a new fact,

that individual would do you a better service who should give you fresh light on this old truth, and make you feel, that not only has prayer power with God, but is very nearly the highest privilege of man.

Let us make a supposition.[1] Suppose that the individual in this kingdom who combines in himself the greatest wisdom and goodness were accessible to you. Suppose that when anything pressed upon you,—a difficulty from which your own sagacity could not extricate you, or an undertaking which your own resources could not compass,—you had only to send him a statement of the case, and were sure, in good time, to get his best and kindest counsel,—would not you deem this a great *privilege?* Would not something of this sort just meet the case of many here? One is entering on a new course of occupation, and at its very outset meets with problems that fairly baffle him, but which a friend of a little more experience or perspicacity could instantly solve. Another is overtaken by a sea of troubles,—a concourse of trials which quite overwhelm him, but through which he perfectly believes that a stronger arm or a more buoyant spirit could carry him. But where shall he look for that wiser friend—that stronger arm? Suppose, again, that when in sudden danger or in deep distress, there were some way by which you could make known your situation to a spirit departed. That spirit is now far wiser than he was when on earth. He has sources of knowledge that are not open to you, and he has powers not yet possessed

[1] This was suggested by a similar idea in a lecture of John Foster's, as preserved in the MS. notes of an intelligent hearer. [We believe that this lecture is the tract on "Access to God," published by the Tract Society.]

by you. Suppose that in grief or in difficulty you could invoke him. Suppose that there were some process by which you could arrest his ear among the glorified, and in a moment bring him though unseen to your side; and suppose that, to this spirit made perfect—the spirit of your departed parent, or of some one remarkable for his wisdom and sanctity—you could detail the whole matter that grieves and perplexes you, and though there should be no response from the viewless shade, you knew that he had heard you, and was away to interpose effectively on your behalf,—would you not feel much comforted and lightened? Would you not resume your own active exertions with far greater hopefulness,—assured that there would now attend them a power beyond what was proper to them, or inherent in yourself? But further, suppose that, instead of any wise or influential personage on earth, or any glorified spirit in paradise, it was possible for you to secure the ear and engage the help of one of the principalities or powers in the heavenly places; some being of such bright intelligence, that he can smile at all our wisdom, and such commanding might, that he can do in a moment what would occupy our race for a millennium; could you for an instant bespeak his attention, and gain assurance of his willingness to help, would you not feel that your object was unspeakably promoted, or your burden amazingly lightened? To have enlisted such ability and skill upon your side,—the few minutes spent in securing such superhuman help—would you not feel that they were a larger contribution towards eventual success than a lifetime of your personal efforts? But rise

a step higher—an infinite step!—and suppose that it were possible to arrest the ear and secure the help of the Most High; suppose that you could, by any possibility, gain the attention of the living God,—that you could secure, not the cold and distant on-looking, but the interested regard and the omnipotent interposition of Jehovah himself,—would not this be a privilege? But this is precisely what prayer is. Some have no friend of extraordinary sagacity or power to go to. The spirits of the departed cannot come to us; and neither to them nor to angels are we warranted to pray. And even though we could evoke a Samuel from the sepulchre, or bring down Gabriel from above the sky,—the blessings which are most needful for us are such as neither Samuel nor Gabriel can give,—blessings of which the treasure lies within the light inaccessible, and of which Omnipotence alone preserves the key. That almighty hand prayer moves. That incommunicable key prayer turns. That unapproachable treasury prayer opens. The blessings which Solomon in all his glory, and Abraham in the bosom of his God, and the seraphs who overshadow the throne,—the blessings which these have not to impart, it is the privilege of prayer to procure.

But set it in another light. Imagine that there had been certain limitations on prayer. Imagine that there had only been one spot on the earth from which prayer could arise with acceptance. Imagine—by no means inconceivable, for there was once something very like it—imagine that the Lord had selected some little spot of earth—a Mount Zion, or a Holy Land—and said that

here, and here only, was the place to worship. Imagine that from this hallowed spot alone there had existed a passage into heaven for the prayers of earth, and that all supplications, however earnest, uttered on the profane soil of the common globe, had gone for nothing. What a resorting we should have seen to this place of only prevalency! When there occurred some conjuncture decisive of weal or woe to an individual or a family, or when a man became so anxious about his soul's salvation that nothing could content him save light from above, we should have seen the busy trader arranging for his protracted absence, and the cautious, untravelled husbandman preparing for the perilous pilgrimage, and multitudes, on their own behalf or on behalf of others, resorting to the place where prayer is heard and answered. And imagine, further, that there had just been one day in the year when prayer was permitted; that those who arrived at the appointed place too late, found the gate of access closed for the next twelve months, and however sudden the emergency, and however extreme its exigency, that it was impossible to do anything for it till the weary year moved round, and brought back the one propitious day;—even thus restricted, would not prayer have been felt to be a privilege worth a pilgrimage and worth a long on-waiting? Just fancy that in our earth's yearly revolution round the sun there was disclosed a crevice in the sky;—that on one night in the year, and on one mountain-top, there was a vista opened through the encircling vault, and a sight of dazzling glories revealed to all who gazed from the favoured summit;—and fancy that through the

brilliant gap there fell a shower of gold and gems, and that this recurred regularly on the self-same evening every year—what a concourse to that Pisgah might you count upon! How many eager eyes would strain the breathless hour beforehand till the first streak of radiance betokened the bursting glory! How many emulous hands would rush together to catch the flaming rubies and the diamond rain!

And just conceive—the only other supposition we shall make—that certain costly or arduous preliminaries were essential in order to successful prayer; suppose that a day's strict abstinence, or some painful self-punishment, were exacted; or that each worshipper were required to bring in his hand some costly offering—the choicest of his flock, or a large percentage on his income. And who would say that this was unreasonable? Would not access into God's own presence—a favour so ineffable—would it not be wisely purchased at any price; and might not sinful "dust and ashes" marvel that after any ordeal or purifying process it was admitted near such Majesty?

But how stands the case? Prayer is not a consultation with the highest wisdom which this world can supply. It is not intercourse with an angel or a spirit made perfect. But it is an approach to the living God. It is access to the High and Holy One who inhabiteth eternity. It is detailing in the ear of Divine sympathy every sorrow. It is consulting with Divine wisdom on every difficulty. It is asking from Divine resources the supply of every want. And this not once in a lifetime, or for a few moments on a stated day of each year, but at any moment,

at every time of need. Whatever be the day of your distress, it is a day when prayer is allowable. Whatever be the time of your calamity, it is a time when prayer is available. However early in the morning you seek the gate of access, you find it already open; and however dark the midnight moment when you find yourself in the sudden arms of death, the winged prayer can bring an instant Saviour near. And this wheresoever you are. It needs not that you climb some special Pisgah or Moriah. It needs not that you should enter some awful shrine, or put off your shoes on some holy ground. Could a memento be reared on every spot from which an acceptable prayer has ascended, and on which a prompt answer has come down, we should find *Jehovah-shammah*—"the Lord hath been here"—inscribed on many a cottage hearth and many a dungeon floor. We should find it not only in Jerusalem's proud temple and David's cedar galleries, but in the fisherman's cottage by the brink of Gennesaret, and in the upper chamber where Pentecost began. And whether it be in the field where Isaac went to meditate, or the rocky knoll where Jacob lay down to sleep, or the brook where Israel wrestled, or the den where Daniel gazed on the hungry lions and the lions gazed on him, or the hill-sides where the Man of Sorrows prayed all night, we should still discern the prints of the ladder's feet let down from heaven—the landing-place of mercies because the starting-point of prayers. And all this whatsoever you are. It needs no saint, no proficient in piety, no adept in eloquent language, no dignitary of earthly rank. It needs but a simple Hannah, or a lisping Samuel. It needs but a blind beggar,

or a loathsome lazar. It needs but a penitent publican, or a dying thief. And it needs no sharp ordeal, no costly passport, no painful expiation, to bring you to the mercy-seat; or rather, I should say, it needs the costliest of all; but the blood of atonement—the Saviour's merit—the name of Jesus—priceless as they are, cost the sinner nothing. They are freely put at his disposal, and instantly and constantly he may use them. This access to God in every place, at every moment, without any price or any personal merit, is it not an amazing privilege?

And yet in this old truth I am anxious, before we part, that you should find a new significance; and, therefore, to make it somewhat more specific, let me apply it to a few cases, probably all represented here.

1. "Is any among you afflicted? Let him pray." "In agony, nature is no atheist. The mind which knows not where to fly, flies to God."[1] And to spring into the arms of Omnipotence, to find refuge in the bosom of Mercy, is to weep no longer. The drowning man whose last sensation was the weltering brine; who felt the seething flood go over him, and as he settled down among the trailing weeds, the memory of home darted like a death-shot through his heart and put an end to other anguish;—when that rescued man opens his eyes beneath some friendly roof, and instead of the watery winding-sheet, and the crawling gulf-monsters, finds himself on a couch of warm comfort, his chamber glowing with the cheerful fagot, a friendly face ready to greet his first waking, and sees through the window the ship that is waiting to bear him

[1] Hannah More on Prayer, p. 153.

back to his native isle,—it may be true that he had treasures in the foundered vessel, and that some curious or precious things he was carrying home may never be fished up from the devouring deep: but how different his lot from the poor castaway, whom the billows have landed on a desolate rock, and who, creeping about in his dripping rags, can find no food but the limpets, no fuel but the crackling wrack, no hovel to shelter him, and no sail to waft him away! Both have been wrecked, and both have lost their all; but in the joy of his rescue the one forgets his poverty, and in his wretched asylum from the waves the other recognises nothing but a prison and a tomb. Precisely similar is the case of the afflicted man who prays, and of him who, when afflicted, cannot pray—the man whom the billows land on the desolate rock of worldliness or atheism, and the man who, from the embrace of drowning waters, wakes up in the pavilion of God's own presence. Both may have suffered equal losses. Both may have left a treasure in the deep. Both may have been washed empty-handed ashore. But the man of prayer is like the man who comes to himself in the asylum of the friendly home. The bliss of pleasant fellowship with God abates or banishes the grief of recent loss. On the lee-shore, which has shattered his frail bark, he is astonished to lift up his eyes and find himself the inmate of a beloved friend and familiar dwelling. He knows that he will land safe at last, and is happy even now. "Is any among you afflicted? Let him pray."

2. Is any among you perplexed? "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all

men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him."

There is an instructive Greek story which tells of a noble youth who had a more than mortal guide. The Prince was frank and manly and docile; but on account of his inexperience often found himself in straits, through which his own sagacity could not steer him. On such occasions, when in danger of falling into designing hands, or committing himself to disastrous counsels, or when actually involved in distresses from which he could not extricate himself, this faithful friend was sure to speed to his rescue. Whatever was the scene of anxiety and affright, he had only to bethink himself of his kind and sagacious counsellor, and that moment Mentor was beside him. What Homer dreamed, the Gospel verifies. It tells that, veiled from our view only by the curtain of this corporeal, but nearer to us than that flesh and blood which hides us from our truest selves, there is an ever-present Friend, who needs only to be remembered in order to prove a present help. It tells us that amidst all our embarrassments and sorrows, grief is never so near but deliverance is nearer still. And it tells us that the confusion and blundering, the foolish bargains and infatuated proceedings which often make us so affronted or indignant at ourselves, might all have been avoided had we timeously resorted to that wonderful Counsellor who encompasses all our ways. In other words, the Bible assures us that, however much we may suffer from the deficiency of our talents and the darkness of our understandings, we suffer still more from not taking advantage of that Wisdom from above who can enlighten

our darkness and elevate all our powers. No man, by taking thought, can add a faculty to his mind, any more than he can add a feature to his countenance or a cubit to his stature; but the man who has learned to pray can, at the throne of grace, procure what really is the enhancement of his intellect and the augmentation of his faculties—that Divine wisdom which will either supersede or supplement his own.

His must be a very easy calling who has never felt the need of more skill and prudence—more *wisdom* than is indigenous to himself. Take the most common instances. You are a father or a mother—perhaps a widowed father or a widowed mother. There are your children rising around you. Allowing that their minds are ever so susceptible and plastic, how important are your every movement and entire demeanour in their bearing on them! A single inconsistency, the most trivial inadvertency, coming with all the sanction of a parent's example, how influential for evil is it sure to be! How possible for a father, by mere inconsiderateness, to perpetuate his own worst qualities in the persons of many survivors; and, just because they loved him so well, and copied him so closely, how possible is it to transmit in his children's characters the facsimile of his *worser* self—the image of his frivolity, or peevishness, or indolence! Nay, how possible is it to convert a child into the perennial monument of a few occasional follies—to prolong, in its habitual character, the sayings and doings of a few unguarded moments! Then, again, there may be among these children more puzzling problems—some who are neither affectionate nor docile—

who are not likely, by a mere moral imbibition, to take in the good influences with which they are surrounded—problems in whose management more than patience and tenderness is needful—refractory, selfish, or peculiar natures, on which nothing but the decisive measures of a deep-seeing sagacity—the bold strokes of a forceful nature—can make any permanent impression. Whosoever occupies a station of moral influence—a station where his labour lies amongst the most perilous materials with which man can intermeddle—the affections and dispositions—the *wills* of other people—must have amazing self-reliance, or a deplorable callousness, if he is not frequently crushed down by the solemnity of his position. It was by one in such a position that a most considerate and magnanimous prayer was offered—a prayer whose spirit every parent, and teacher, and pastor should emulate, just as a similar answer is what every parent, and teacher, and pastor who offers it is encouraged to expect:—"In Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream by night: and God said, Ask what I shall give thee. And Solomon said, Thou hast showed unto thy servant David my father great mercy, according as he walked before thee in truth, and in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart with thee: and thou hast kept for him this great kindness, that thou hast given him a son to sit on his throne, as it is this day. And now, O Lord my God, thou hast made thy servant king instead of David my father; and I am but a little child: I know not how to go out or come in. And thy servant is in the midst of thy people which thou hast chosen: a great people, that cannot be numbered nor counted for multi-

tude. Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people? And the speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing. And God said unto him, Because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life; neither hast asked riches for thyself, nor hast asked the life of thine enemies; but hast asked for thyself understanding to discern judgment; behold, I have done according to thy words: lo, I have given thee a wise and understanding heart, so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee. And I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, both riches and honour."

3. Is any among you embarked in an important undertaking? "Commit thy way unto the Lord, and he shall bring it to pass. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he will direct thy steps." Some feel as if it were presumption to implore God's blessing on their daily toils and secular callings. They feel as if spiritual mercies were the only proper themes for prayer, and as if it were a desecration of Jehovah's presence-chamber to carry thither matters so mean as our worldly undertakings and every-day concerns. And assuredly, if a man were to make nothing else than his worldly welfare the subject of his supplications, it would be much the same with him as with those sordid spirits who had no other use for the temple than to make it a market-place for the sale of doves and oxen; and "Let not the earthly-minded man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord." But if you be in the habit

of resorting to the throne of grace for spiritual mercies, to that throne you naturally and lawfully resort for temporal mercies also. And, indeed, no undertaking or employment of a Christian can be altogether secular. The mere fact that it is his gives it a certain sacredness, and identifies it with the interests of God's kingdom on earth. It is not a matter of no moment whether a servant who makes profession of religion shall fulfil the duties of his station no better than others who make no profession. It is not a matter of no religious moment whether a student professing piety shall not be more industrious and successful than one who scoffs at the Bible. And it is not a matter of no consequence whether the business transactions and household arrangements and personal exertions of professing Christians shall not surpass the usual style of the worldly. And so far as the glory of God and the honour of the Divine Redeemer are implicated, it is incumbent on every believer to bespeak from above that help which will make him more than a conqueror even in his worldly calling. But more than this: there is nothing which can be momentous to a child of God which is not also interesting to his heavenly Father. A kind parent is not only ready to snatch his child from the fire, but to relieve him from lesser miseries. He is not only willing to give him an ample education or provide for his distant well-being; but, if there be nothing wrong in it, he is ready to indulge even his least desires—ready to help him in his most trivial pursuits. And so, the petition, "Our Father who art in heaven, give us this day our daily bread," is to teach us that nothing affects the welfare or comfort of His

feeblest child, but it is ready to receive the consideration of His heavenly Father, and so is a fit subject for prayer. And just as the Lord is ready to hear prayer in such cases, so it is the wisdom of every one to lighten his own labour and secure his own success by timely supplication. Jacob's prayer did more to propitiate Esau than Jacob's present. Eliezer's petition, as he knelt by the camel's side, did more to prosper his embassy than his own and his master's precautions. And Hezekiah's intercession rescued Jerusalem when its walls were tottering, and nothing but the arm of Jehovah could lay the invader low. We know not the secret history of this world's mightiest transactions and its proudest monuments; but from the little that we know, we can affirm that the men who have prospered best are the men who have taken time to pray. It was to prayer that Henry IV. of France ascribed his crown, and Gustavus owed his victories. The father of the modern fine arts was wont, before he began any new composition, to invoke His inspiration, who in other days taught Aholiab; and the Goliath of English literature felt that he studied successfully when he had prayed earnestly. And what Michael Angelo and Milton and Johnson found so helpful to their mighty genius cannot hinder us. You have read in our own history of that hero who, when an overwhelming force was in full pursuit, and all his followers were urging him to more rapid flight, coolly dismounted in order to repair a flaw in his horse's harness. Whilst busied with the broken buckle, the distant cloud swept down in nearer thunder; but just as the prancing hoofs and eager spears were closing in on him, the flaw

was mended, the clasp was fastened, the steed was mounted, and like a swooping falcon he had vanished from their view. The broken buckle would have left him on the field a dismounted and inglorious prisoner. The timely delay sent him in safety back to his huzzaing comrades. There is in daily life the same luckless precipitancy, and the same profitable delay. The man who, from his prayerless waking, bounces off into the business of the day, however good his talents and great his diligence, is only galloping on a steed harnessed with a broken buckle, and must not marvel if in his hottest haste, or most hazardous leap, he be left inglorious in the dust; and though it may occasion some little delay beforehand, his neighbour is wiser who sets all in order before the march begins.

4. But covet most earnestly the best gifts. Is any among you in earnest about his soul, but distressed by reason of darkness? "If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" If any one be in the outset of his religious inquiries, he will feel a special lack. The subjects to which his thoughts are now turned are novel. Till now, he has not paid much attention to them; and now, when they have become urgent, he feels foreign in the midst of them. He takes up the Bible, but it is altogether so peculiar, the truths it handles are so far out of the ordinary way of his thinking, and its very style is so alien from his ordinary mode of expression, that he feels much as a person might be supposed to feel who had somehow been transported to another planet, and not only saw forms of exist-

ence there totally different from anything which his fancy had ever conceived, but who had not been long among them till he began to surmise that he was not competent to understand them thoroughly. He has not been long in this new world till he begins to suspect that more than five senses are needed here. He notices appearances which indicate that matters are transpiring which his ear cannot detect, and into which his eye cannot penetrate. He finds himself in a world of deepest interest, but a world of distressing mystery. Enough comes within his cognizance to make him wish that he were able to understand it all; but to convince him that its most characteristic things are those which he does not know, and has not the means of finding out. Or, to use a more obvious illustration:—Most persons in the outset of their spiritual enlightenment are in the case of the blind man at Bethsaida when his sight was half-restored. He looked up and saw men like trees walking. He saw that he was in a world of light, and verdure, and vivacity; but it was all a jumble of leafy men, and walking trees—a medley of light and motion. He had no clear perceptions—no sharp and definite ideas. But—another touch of the same miraculous finger!—he looked again, and the men walked and the trees stood still, the boats gleamed over Gennesaret, and Bethsaida smiled back to the summer sky. At the commencement of a religious inquiry, the man finds himself in a region of deep interest, but withal a region of dim outlines and flickering obscurity. His notions run into one another, and he has rather a confused impression of the extent of the landscape, than a clear perception of any

one object in it. Like the man who confounded walking people with growing trees, he is apt to confound one doctrine with another. He mistakes faith for the Saviour. He blends together the Gospel and the Law, and thinks that there must be a change in himself before he is entitled to believe in Christ for salvation. And if, at this stage, friendly counsellors come in with their distinctions and explanations, they answer much the same purpose as a neighbour who should have endeavoured to expound the landscape to the half-enlightened Galilean. After all his well-meant efforts, the scene would still have showed a chaos of glimmering colours and dancing blotches, and nothing but another touch of the omnipotent hand could project the whole into splendid distinctness. And, just as in the case of the dim-seeing Galilean, it was not so much a sunshine as a ghost of light which saluted his eye-balls —so, in the outset of a spiritual earnestness, it often happens that it is not the warm and radiant Gospel which meets the exploring vision, but a cold and hazy version of it. It is not that Gospel through which the love of God sheds its flood of endearment, but a Gospel in a mist—a Gospel of conflicting attributes and ambiguous meaning—a Gospel of dim love and doubtful kindness. And it is not till a power from on high imparts clearer perceptions and intenser vision, that, like the joyful scenes which rushed on the fully-opened eyes of the Bethsaidan, the scheme of mercy stands out in assuring distinctness, and then melts in upon the soul in its genial beauty and overwhelming glories.

Now, my friends, if any of you are in this case—if you

have for some time wished a clear theology and a soul-satisfying religion, this is the way to get it. You have, perhaps, sought it in books and in sermons. Perhaps you have sought it in the Bible, and in close thinking, and yet you have not found it. Seek it "from above." Seek it in prayer. Don't shut the Bible and forsake the sanctuary. Don't fling away the book, or cease to reflect and meditate, but seek the wisdom from on high. It is not plainer preaching—certainly it is not a clearer Bible that you need; but it is a clearer eyesight—a power of sharper discernment, and a more perspicacious insight in yourself. This "opening of your eyes"—this exaltation of your faculties, God alone can give. But He *will* give it. You lack wisdom. Ask it of God. With your reading, hearing, meditation, mingle prayer; and, in the brightening of your views, and the strengthening of your faith, you will find that God is sending out His light and truth, and by the illumination of His own Spirit, is making you wiser than all your teachers.

VI.

THE OPEN REWARD OF SECRET PRAYER.

"Thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly."—MATT. vi. 6.

WE do not need to enter the closet in order to find the Lord. He is ever near us. But we enter it in order to escape from disturbance, and in order to regain those associations, and, it may be, to surround ourselves with those mementos, which we formerly found helpful to our prayers. One who has great powers of abstraction may take refuge from surrounding bustle in the depth of his own spirit, and pass along the crowded streets in the perpetual hermitage of his own self-seclusion, undiverted and undistracted by all that is whirling around him. But few have this talent of inward sequestration—this power to make a closet of themselves; and in order to find for their thoughts a peaceful sanctuary, they must find for their persons a tranquil asylum. It little matters where or what it is. Isaac went out into the field, and Jacob plied his night-long prayer beside the running brook. Abraham planted a grove, and in the cool shadow of his oaks at Beersheba he called on the name of the Lord. Abraham's servant

knelt down beside his camel; and it would appear, from some of his psalms, that a cave, a mountain fastness, or a cavern in the rocks, was David's frequent oratory. Peter had chosen for his place of prayer the quiet and airy roof of his sea-side lodging, when the messengers of Cornelius found him. It would seem that the open air—the noiseless amplitude of the "solitary place,"—the hill-side, with the stars above, and the shadowy world below—the fragrant stillness of the garden when evening had dismissed the labourers, were the places where the Man of Sorrows loved to pray. It was in the old church of Ayr that John Welsh was wont, all alone, to wrestle with the Angel of the covenant; and we have stood in the wild rock-cleft where Peden found frequent refuge from his persecutors, and whence he caused his cry to ascend "unto the Lord most high." It does not need four walls and a bolted door to make a place of prayer. Retirement, and silence, and a sequestered spirit, will create it anywhere. By the shore of the sounding sea, in the depths of the forest, in the remoteness of the green and sunny upland, or the balmy peacefulness of the garden bower—nay, amidst the dust of the dingy wareroom, or the cobwebs of the owlet-haunted barn, in the jolting corner of the crowded stage, or the unnoticed nook of the travellers' room, you have only to shut your eyes, and seclude your spirit, and you have created a closet there. It is a closet wherever the soul finds itself alone with God.

But, besides a still and silent place, it is important to have a stated place for prayer—"thy" closet—thy familiar and frequented place. Although places have not so

much influence on us as persons, their influence is great. There are places where we would like to be when trial comes—places where we should like to be if we are to sicken and be laid aside—places where we should like to die—and places where we find it most congenial and delightful to pray. Homes of the spirit they are; places that seem to understand us and be in sympathy with us; places that have, as it were, imbibed, and do still retain, something of the joys we once tasted in them; places which make bereavement less awful, loneliness less desolate, happiness more intense, and heaven more near. When Elijah came to Sarepta, and found the son of the widow dead, he snatched the child from the bosom of the weeping mother, and carried him "to the loft where he abode, and laid him on his own bed." And there "he cried unto the Lord, O Lord my God! let this child's soul come into him again." He felt as if this loft, where he had so often prayed before, was the likeliest place for prayer now—the place where he might penetrate into Jehovah's nearest presence, and procure an unprecedented blessing. And on this principle, perhaps, it was that David, when tidings came of the death of Absalom, hasted up to the "chamber over the gate." His heart was breaking, and lest it should burst altogether in this unutterable sorrow, he sped away to the place where he had found lesser sorrows lightened; and, as he staggered up into this secret sanctuary, passionate grief began to give place to prayer, "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!" And this is the best consecration any

sanctuary or secret chamber can acquire—the consciousness that there you have met with God, and the hope instinctive that there you may meet Him yet again. Happy are you if there be a house of prayer, or a private dwelling, which awakens in you, as you near it, a rush of holy feelings or happy recollections—a sanctuary round which a constant Sabbath shines, and a perpetual air of heaven reposes. And happy are you if, in your residence, there be a room—however sombre the stranger may think it—which you cannot enter without a secret comfort suffusing your spirit; a room where, in dreariest moments, you feel that you are not friendless, and in darkest days that you are not hopeless; a room in which memory has built its Peniels and Ebenezers—its memorials of ecstatic hours and answered petitions; a chamber which you abandon with regret when called to quit the dwelling, as if, in leaving it, you left the gate of heaven—the closet where you used to shut to the door and pray to your Father in secret, and feel that He was hearing you.

And here I may just notice, that, apart from the open return, there is a *secret* reward of secret prayer. There is a peculiar and present joy in communion with God. The deepest pleasures are the purest; and of all pleasures the purest is the peace of God. To feel that He is love—to draw so near Him as to forget the world—so near as to lose the love of sin—so near that all sensual delights are drowned in the river of His pleasures, and all holy joys enhanced in the brightness of His smile—to bask, for ever so brief a moment, in the light inaccessible, and rejoice with loyalty of spirit in Jehovah's righteous

sovereignty, and feel, through all recesses of the soul, the sin-supplanting flow and beatific thrills of infinite holiness and soul-transforming love—to be this, and feel this, is of all pleasures the sweetest—of all blessedness the purest and most profound. And next to this high communion with God—next to this joy of passions lulled, and sins slain, and self forgotten in adoring fellowship with the Father of Lights—is their sedater comfort who can pour their griefs into their heavenly Father's bosom, or who feel that they have bespoken help against coming toils and trials at their heavenly Father's hand. To know that God is near—to know that He is trusted, honoured, loved—to feel that you are acting towards Him as a reverential and affectionate child, and that He is feeling towards you as a gracious and compassionate Father—there is in this itself an exquisite satisfaction, a present reward.

But, besides this secret reward—this present recompense, of which the praying soul alone is conscious—there is an open reward of secret prayer promised in the text, and verified wherever secret prayer is practised.

1. And, first of all, we remark, that the answer is sometimes open when the prayer is secret. The world sees the result when it little suspects the effectual antecedent. When Jacob and Esau met—on the one side the shaggy chieftain with his four hundred swordsmen, and on the other side the limping shepherd with his caravan of children and cattle—a flock of sheep approaching a band of wolves; when the patriarch took his staff in his hand and stepped forward to meet the embattled com-

pany, and the anxious retinue awaited the issue—they saw the tear start into the rough huntsman's eye—they saw the sword drop from Esau's hand—they saw his brawny arms round Jacob's neck—they saw in the red savage a sudden and unlooked-for brother. They saw the result, but they had not seen the prelude which led to it. They had not been with Jacob at the ford of Jabbok the night before. They had not viewed his agony and heard his prayer; and though they noticed the halting limb, they did not know the victory whose token it was. They saw the patriarch, the husband, and the father; but they knew not that he was a prince with God, and had gained Esau's heart from Him who has all hearts in His hand. The reconciliation was obvious, but the wrestling overnight was unknown. The reward was open, but the prayer was secret.

And so there are many benefits which a believer secures by prayer—benefits which the world envies or wonders at, but of which the world knows not the secret source. "This man—there is some charm about him, for all things succeed with him. Things in which others fail, he puts to his hand to them, and instantly they take another turn—they swing right—they stand fast—they prosper well. He has some magic—for whatever be the mischief, he escapes it—whatever be the calamity, it cannot come near him. He has got the talisman which made the wearer invisible, all except his shadow. When any disaster comes down, it crushes that shadow—any blow, it divides that shadow—any trap, it only catches that shadow—his truest self gets always clear off." You

are perfectly right. It is a singular fact—a peculiar circumstance. "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust. Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night, nor for the arrow that flieth by day. A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee. Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold, and see the reward of the wicked. Because thou hast made the Lord, who is my refuge, even the Most High, thy habitation, there shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. Thou shalt call upon him, and he will answer thee: he will be with thee in trouble. He will deliver thee and honour thee." Prayer is the talisman. The secret of the Lord's presence is the protecting charm. The eye of Omniscience detects his dangers, and the hand of Omnipotence clears his path, and finishes his work, and dispels or reconciles his foes. The closet secured it, but the world beholds it. The prayer was secret, but the reward is open.

Amongst these open rewards of secret prayer, we would specify presence of mind and composure of spirit. There are some persons of a calm temperament, who pass sedately through every scene, and are seldom taken by surprise. They are persons of ready wit and exhaustless resources and constant self-command. But there are others fearful and foreboding, easily stunned, and easily agitated. They are perpetually apprehending a lion in the street, and go about any new undertaking with as much anxiety as would

suffice for the most arduous enterprise. They will pass by the perilous house on which they are designing a visit, or at last address themselves to the knocker with as much trepidation as if they expected something very awful to dart from behind it. And when any little incident occurs —any conjuncture requiring promptitude or dexterity— their wits, only agile in forsaking them, are sure to be out of the way. The moment is flown—the propitious instant is past—and it is only when the opportunity is gone, and for ever, that they perceive the very thing they should have said or done, but in their confusion it did not occur to them. For this sore evil we know no better remedy than the prescription of the text. Prayer calms and fortifies the mind, and so prepares it for the rapid incidents and sudden emergencies of the day. But it does more than this. Just as you may have noticed those who move in the highest circles, and who are accustomed to the loftiest society; they not only continue calm and collected when others are embarrassed or unhinged, but in circumstances of delicacy or distress to others, by a certain high-born address—a certain conscious felicity—they not only save themselves from awkwardness, but give a happy extrication to all around them. So there are certain persons belonging to the peerage of the faithful—men of as old a family as Enoch's—princely natures who are wont to converse with the King of kings—men who in their walk with God have learned the happy art of possessing their own souls, and tranquillizing the souls of others. Their hearts are fixed, and when they hear of evil tidings, they not only are not themselves afraid, but their assurance

comforts and composes others. And beyond all this, the man of prayer is preternaturally prompted and strengthened from above. Like the first disciples, he needs to take no thought how or what he shall say or do, for in the hour of exigency the Holy Ghost will teach him. And hence, in all high emergencies, men of prayer have surpassed themselves, and have felt that a courage, or prudence, or eloquence, was lent them, at which they themselves wondered, and which they only understood by recollecting that in their lack of wisdom they had asked of God. And so, brethren, if you would be carried bravely through scenes of affright—dexterously through scenes of difficulty—or triumphantly through scenes of awful alternative, resort to your Father in secret. When Nehemiah was enabled to put the case of his people so touchingly to the Assyrian monarch, the pathos of his statement, the unwonted kindness of the king, and the prompt concession of his prayer, were the open reward of a secret ejaculation. And when Paul, on board the foundering ship, played such a gallant part—the prisoner superseding centurion, captain, pilot, and all—the heroic coolness, the veteran sagacity, the sublime composure which made him appear a sort of deity, were the answer to fasting and prayer. When his friends asked the great physician Boerhaave how he could possibly go through so much work from day to day, and pass tranquil through so many fretting scenes, he told them that his plan was to devote the first hour of every morning to prayer and meditation on the Word of God.

Another open reward of secret prayer is spirituality of mind. By a spiritual mind, we do not mean a severe

mind, or a sombre. We do not mean a peculiar phraseology, or an affected religionism; but we mean that state of a mind right with God, when it is thoroughly alive to the things of God—that vividness of faith when the things unseen are very solid, and that vivacity of feeling when things sacred are congenial and interesting and affecting. A spiritual mind is one to which the Bible is something better than a dictionary, and to which the Sabbath, with its exercises, does not bring the sense of drudgery. It is a mind clear-seeing and keen-hearing; a mind of quick perceptions and prompt emotions; a mind to which the Saviour stands out a living person, and for which heaven is waiting an expected home; a mind so sensitive, that sin makes it writhe with agony, whilst it finds in holiness a true deliciousness, and in God's conscious favour an elevating joy. Now, brethren, if you would possess such a mind, you must keep it fresh and vegete and lifesome by secret prayer. Some professors are, in this respect, deplorably wanting. Their religion is formality. Their conversation rather quotes from past experience than utters what they now realize and feel. True piety is like the vestal fire which was intended to burn day and night, and never to go out, and which never did go out, so long as they remembered to replenish it day by day. The religious profession of some people is like the ashes on a rusty altar, which show that there once were warmth and light and flame, but which also show that it is long since any worshipped there. Brethren, do you, morning by morning, pour on the oil of secret prayer, and add the fresh fuel of some Bible truth well pondered, and your fire will not go out.

The altar of your heart will never subside to rust and coldness; and you will always have, at least, a little spark with which to kindle others. Or, using a homelier metaphor, religion, in the soul of a man, is like some precious thing in a vessel of ill-seasoned timber. Not only does the rough wear of this rude world sore batter it, but the burning sun of secularity, the glow of daily business, is enough to fill it full of flaws and fissures; and it is only by putting it to steep overnight in the pool of Siloah, that the chinks will close, and the cracked and leaky firkin be rendered fit for another morning's use. But the man who abounds in secret prayer will not only preserve his own vitality; he will carry away from God's presence peace and joy and energy enough to make him a benefactor to others. A man mighty in prayer is a perpetual comfort—a continual cordial in a world like this. When a prayerless professor tries to comfort the afflicted, he defeats his own well-meant efforts. When he enters the house of mourning, or sits down by the sick man's side, it is like a traveller coming in from a frosty atmosphere to the chamber of a nervous invalid. Though enveloped in broadcloth and fur, he brings enough of winter in his clothes to make the poor patient chatter. But the man of prayer carries with him a genial clime. Even in the dead season of the year, when frost is black and fields are iron, he carries summer in his person. "All his garments smell of myrrh and aloes and cassia," for his closet is the ivory palace—the gay conservatory where flowers of paradise are blooming all the year. There is a gladness in his coming, for he never comes alone. He carries his Saviour with him.

Then we arrive at the crowning recompense—the open reward of the great day. At that day no man will be saved for his prayers. It will be said to none, "You have been so holy and so devout, you have prayed so much, and laboured so hard, that on you the second death has no power." But though it is entirely and solely for the prayers, the precious blood, and perfect righteousness of God's dear Son, that any soul can enter heaven, there will, at that disclosing day, be a rich reward of secret prayers When every one receives the things done in the body, eminent intercessors will receive the final answer to the prayers of a lifetime. Of many of the petitions offered now, we know not what becomes. Some are for places far away; some for people whom we never see again; some for blessings which, if bestowed, we can never know it. But all these prayers are efficacious. If prayers of faith, they all have prevalency. They have effected something; and they are all *self-registering.* They go into the book of remembrance. They keep account of themselves, or rather God keeps it; and when the great day comes round, and the throne is set and the books are opened, it will be seen how much every Christian has prayed, what were the gifts he coveted most earnestly, and what were the petitions he urged most frequently. And strange things will come to light that day. Here is one who was never known on earth; perhaps in all the right-hand company none can recollect his name. He was very poor. He had no money to give to the cause of Christ—hardly the two mites;—and he was very plain, simple, and unlearned. He could not express himself. But his name is Israel. He was a

prince with God, and see how often he has prevailed. And here is another, who was bed-rid many years, could not work, could not visit, could not write; but she could pray. And see what a benefactress she has been! See this long list of affectionate intercessions for her relatives and neighbours and friends; these many supplications for the Church and the world, for the unconverted, for missions, for mourners in Zion! And see the answers! What a Dorcas she has been—though she could make no garments for the poor! What a Phœbe—though she could not stir a step! What a Priscilla—though she could expound the way of God to few, for her prayers often did it all! And here is another. He had just escaped from Papal darkness, and was beginning to enlighten others, when he was put in prison, and after months of languishing he went up from Smithfield in his chariot of fire—a martyr of Jesus Christ. He never preached. He was refused the use of pen and ink. He wrote nothing. He printed nothing. He spake to no one, for thick dungeon-walls enclosed him. But he prayed. From the height of His sanctuary the Lord looked down; He heard the groaning of this prisoner; and we who sit under the light of the glorious Reformation enjoy the answer.

VII.

PRAYERS SEEMINGLY UNANSWERED.

"Ask, and it shall be given you."—MATT. vii. 7.
"Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss."—JAMES iv. 3.

SUPPOSE that a man takes up his pen and a piece of parchment, and writes on the top of it, "To the Queen's Most Excellent Majesty, the humble petition of So-and-so," but there he stops. He sits with the pen in his hand for half an hour, but does not add another word; then rises and goes his way. And he repeats this process day after day—beginning a hundred sheets of paper, but putting into them no express request; sometimes, perhaps, scrawling down a few sentences which nobody can read, not even himself, but never plainly and deliberately setting down what it is that he desires. Can he wonder that his blank petitions and scribbled parchments have no sensible effect on himself nor any one else besides? And has he any right to say, "I wonder what can be the matter? Other people get answers to their petitions, but I am not aware that the slightest notice has ever been taken of one of mine. I am not conscious of having got a single favour, nor do I feel a whit the better for all that I have written." Could you expect it? When did you ever finish a petition?

When did you ever despatch and forward one to the feet of majesty?

And so, my friends, there are many persons who pass their days inditing blank petitions—or rather petitionless forms of prayer. Every morning they bend their knee, and continue a few moments in the devotional attitude. They address themselves to the heavenly Majesty. They call on the "great and dreadful name" of God, and then repeat a few formal and unfelt sentences; or perhaps they say nothing at all: they leave the petition a perfect blank. And after this form of worship they go their way, and wonder why their prayers are not heard. Other people get answers, but they are not conscious that any prayer of theirs has ever produced the least effect.

Now of this we are very certain, that there is no prayer but *something comes of it.* Leaving out of view those vain and rambling repetitions—those empty words which constitute the entire devotions of some formalists—we are warranted by the Word of God to aver that there is no real prayer which is not somehow disposed of—no request presented at the mercy-seat which is not, in the Psalmist's language, "considered," and either refused or granted. Many appear to fancy that prayers are like a flight of promiscuous missiles, of which a few find the mark, but the greater number alight nowhere, and bring back nothing. This infidel and irrational view gets no countenance from the Word of God. There we learn, that if it be a prayer at all—a sincere desire offered to the living God in His appointed way—it obtains an answer, whether that answer be a full or partial compliance, or an entire

refusal. And it therefore becomes a question of the utmost practical moment to know what those conditions are that mar the efficacy, or impede the return of prayers.

1. It is competent to the sovereign to fix the channel through which he desires that his subjects should transmit their petitions. Owing to their elevated rank, some have a right to request an immediate audience of majesty, and present their applications in proper person and in their own name; but usually there is some fixed medium through which the suits of common subjects must come—a particular minister through whom all memorials and supplications must be transmitted. Now there is a celestial peerage who come before the King of kings in their own right. The sons of God—some orders of the heavenly host—need no mediator in drawing near to God. They come with veiled faces and lowly reverence, but still they come in virtue of their birthright—they come direct. It is not so, however, with our world's population. Not so much on account of our lowlier rank, as of our personal demerit, there is no immediate entrance for any son of Adam into the presence of the heavenly Majesty. But there is a daysman appointed; and, so to speak, it is a standing order in the court of heaven, that each petition from earth shall be transmitted through "the Minister of the new covenant"—through that Divine Person on whose shoulder is devolved the government of this our far-off colony. Now, what say you? Suppose that any one should try to overleap this standing order—suppose that any one should either in proud stubbornness scorn it, or carelessly forget it, and try to forward his petition in

nis own name—can he wonder if an omission so flagrant should insure its rejection? The petition may be very earnest, and its object may be perfectly right, but the mode of its transmission is wrong. And this is no matter of mere etiquette, like some of the court arrangements of earth, but a matter of high import, and meant to fulfil exalted ends. It is designed in honour of the Prince of Peace, to whose memorable interposition it is owing that there is any loyalty in this revolted world, and to whose administration the entire of its affairs is now intrusted, and to whose name it is but seemly that every knee should bow. Whosoever would present an acceptable petition and secure a return to his prayer, must remember that saying of the Lord Jesus himself, "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son."

2. But, secondly, besides asking in a self-righteous spirit, a person may actually ask wrong things. A child who has never seen a serpent before, and who looks at it through the glass frame, may think it very beautiful. As it curls and glides about in its folds of green and gold, and its ruby eyes sparkle in the sun, it looks far prettier than more familiar objects, and the child may long to grasp it; "but what man is there among you who is a father, if his son ask a serpent, will he give him the serpent?" And supposing that the fretful child should weep because he is not allowed to fondle the asp, could worse befall him than just to be allowed to smash the case and clutch the envenomed reptile? The Lord has sometimes permitted His imperious and wayward children

thus to punish themselves; but more frequently and more mercifully, He refuses their hearts' deceitful lust. One sets his eye on the golden idol, and prays that God would make him rich. But the Lord still keeps the shining serpent beyond his reach; for should he have succeeded in hugging it to his bosom, it might have stung him with many sorrows, or even plunged him in perdition. Another sets his eye on the fiery-flying serpent of fame, and wanders after it, and wishes that he too could fix his reputation to it, and see his own name flickering as part of its meteor-train in its flight through the firmament. But this wish is also refused, and instead of a dizzy and dangerous renown, he is appointed to a safe obscurity. And sometimes requests, right or religious-looking, are refused. When the mother of Zebedee's children came and said, "Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand and the other on thy left, when thou comest in thy kingdom,"—there were plausibility and a certain amount of faith in the petition. It assumed that Christ had indeed a kingdom, and was yet to come gloriously, and it said that the highest honour she could seek for James and John was the highest office there. But the request was ambitious. It was wrong, and was refused.

3. This leads us to remark that a person may ask right things with a wrong motive. When Simon Magus besought the apostles that he might receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, he asked a good thing—emphatically the best thing; but he asked it with a bad motive, that he might make it a source of personal gain; and instead of a

blessing his prayer was answered with a curse. "Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts." Even spiritual mercies are refused to you, because you would employ them on carnal ends.

4. Such a sin may be cherished in the heart as makes prayer unavailing. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." To keep a sin in the heart whilst there is a prayer on the lips, is like going into the monarch's presence arm in arm with a rebel, or getting some noted enemy of his to countersign our petition. "It is, as it were, courting a refusal. It is effectually saying to God, 'Thy greatest blessing I am content to want. Holiness, deliverance from sin, I am willing to do without; but this particular boon, as it is Thine to bestow, so I am reluctantly constrained to ask it from Thee.'"[1] It is as if the one hand held out a plea for God's favour, and the other a defiance of His frown. In truth, it is the more honest part of the man contradicting the other; the sinner shouting the *Nay* to the *Amen* of the hypocrite, and drowning in his louder voice the feeble muttering of the feigned lips. You have all heard of Augustine's prayer. In the days of his licentiousness he had too much conscience to live without prayer, and too much love of sin to pray without a secret reservation; and so his prayer ran, "Lord! convert me—oh, convert me—but not to-day, Lord! not to-day." And the same is the translated purport of many a prayer. One prays, "Lead me not into temptation," when he has already in his

[1] Foster, MS.

possession the playhouse ticket, which he means to use that evening; or when he has already made an engagement with some of his ungodly friends, and is looking forward with eagerness to their society. Another prays, "And forgive me my trespasses," when he has in his heart a scheme of revenge, and is already in imagination glorying over his humbled rival or defeated adversary. And a third prays, "Lord, let me die the death of the righteous," when he has already made all the arrangements for some nefarious transaction, and when the very next act of self-denial which he is called to exercise will be the triumph of sensuality or self-indulgence. And a fourth cries, "As I to others mercy show, I mercy beg from Heaven;" and at that moment he is allowing some necessitous kinsman to languish in neglected misery, or with an ample fortune is contributing nothing to the diffusion of that Gospel which is the only means of rescuing men from eternal ruin.

5. Some prayers are not heard because men do not believe that God will grant them. Were you writing a note to a friend, and saying, "I would be much the better for such a thing,"—naming it. "You can easily spare it; but I have little expectation that you will do me such a favour;" would this be a likely way to compass his object? Though he had wished to fail, could he have worded his application otherwise? And so, when a man kneels down and prays for pardon of his sins, or for the teaching of the Holy Spirit, or for assurance of salvation, but prays for them as if the Lord would grudge to give them, can he wonder that he is not heard? Whatsoever

the Lord has promised, that He is willing to bestow, and, "whatsoever things we ask in prayer, believing that we have them, we receive them."

6. Some prayers are not answered because, though earnest at the time, the petitioner has grown indifferent afterwards.

7. Some prayers are answered, but the answer is a long time arrived before the petitioner adverts to it. Like a man who despatches for the physician one express after another, and at last he arrives, and is actually in the house; but, unapprised of his presence, the sick man sends off another messenger to hasten his approach. Or as you may have sent for some book or other object which you were anxious to possess, but as it is long of making its appearance, your anxiety to see it begins to abate, and by and by you have almost forgotten it; when some day you take up a parcel that has long lain unopened in a corner of the room, and find that it is the very thing you were once so impatient to get. "And when did this arrive?" Oh! months ago. "How strange, then, that I should never have noticed it till now!" In extreme agony Jacob vowed a vow, and prayed a prayer: "If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace; then the Lord shall be my God, and this stone which I have set up for a pillar shall be God's house." It was an earnest and importunate prayer. It was answered. Every petition was fulfilled. All that he asked, Jacob obtained. He got bread to eat; he got

raiment to put on. He was delivered from Esau his brother. He came back to his father's house in peace and in unexpected prosperity. But it never occurred to Jacob that his prayer was answered till the Lord himself reminded him. He might have seen the answer in his peaceful tent, in his grazing flocks and herds, in his large and powerful family, and in himself—the fugitive lad come home a prince and a patriarch. But it was not till the Lord appeared and said, "Arise, go up to Bethel, and dwell there; and make there an altar unto God that appeared unto thee when thou fleddest from Esau thy brother;" it was not till then that Jacob recollected the vow or detected the answer; and had the Lord not reminded him, Bethel and its pillar might have faded for ever from Jacob's memory. And so parents, in the days of their children's infancy, often pray for their children's conversion, and when they see their wayward freaks and wicked tempers, the tear starts in their eye, and they are ready to give up hope. But one by one the Lord brings them to Himself. The prayer is partly or wholly answered, and ere they are gathered to their fathers, these parents find themselves surrounded by a godly seed. But it never strikes them that here is an answer to prayer. Or a company of Christians pray for a revival of religion, and they fix their eye on a particular spot of the horizon, nothing doubting but that it is there the cloud must appear. And whilst they continue in prayer, and mourn that the sky continues brass, they never notice that in the opposite quarter the heavens are melting, and there is an abundance of rain. Though not in the form nor in the

direction which they first desired, still the blessing is come: and perhaps in measure it surpasses their fondest expectation and their largest petition. Whilst they are deploring their want of success, God has been doing for them exceeding abundantly above all that they could ask or think.

VIII.

CONFESSION, ADORATION, THANKSGIVING.

'I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. . . . Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye righteous; and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart."—PSALM xxxii. 5, 11.

ALTHOUGH prayer, in its strictest sense, be the supplication of mercies for ourselves or others, the devotional exercises of believers are not confined to mere petitions. In the Psalms, and other Bible-specimens of prayer, we find acknowledgments of sin, the praises of the Divine perfections, and grateful ascriptions for good and perfect gifts bestowed; and, that our survey may be the more complete, we shall bestow the present discourse on the threefold subject of Confession, Adoration, and Thanksgiving.

Were confession a mere act of self-mortification—did it stop short in mere regrets and self-reproaches—it would answer little end. The rash words which no compunction can recall—the wasted Sabbaths which no wishes can redeem—the broken hearts of distant days and departed friends, which no churchyard sighs can heal, and the demolished joys which no tears can create anew:—

> "For, violets pluck'd, the sweetest showers
> Can ne'er make grow again:"

were confession merely the mental penance of remembering and brooding over these, there were no need to add it to the sum of human sorrow. But evangelical confession —that discovery and acknowledgment of the outstanding sins of his history, and the conspicuous sins of his character, as well as of the guilt of his original—which the Word of God requires from each of us, is for purposes totally different. Evangelical confession is the inlet to peace with God, and the outset of new obedience.

The great object of self-examination should be to search out the sin, with the express view, and on very purpose, to cast it into the Fountain opened in the House of David; and then the confession will bring comfort to the sinner, when he thinks that the cleansing currents of atoning blood have washed his guilt away. Like the camp of Israel on the day of atonement: they all met—the most solemn fast of their year—before the tabernacle, in the morning very early; and after many other ceremonies, two goats were brought up to the high priest at the altar. He placed himself between them, and shook a box, in which were two little tablets, one inscribed "For Jehovah," the other, "For Azazel." When he drew the one, he said with a loud voice, "For Jehovah," and placed the tablet on the head of the right-hand goat. Then he confessed over it his own and the people's sins, and slew it, and carried the blood into the Holy Place, as an atonement for his own sins and the people's. The high priest then went to the goat "Azazel," and put his hands upon its head, and confessed over it again the sins of himself and the people; and, when this was done, an appointed person

came forward and carried the goat away to the wilderness, where it should wander and be lost, or he threw it over the rocks that it might return no more. It needed the twofold emblem to shadow Him whose atonement is at once the *removal* of guilt and the *reparation* for it; whose blood cleanseth from sin, and whose worthiness carrieth sin away. And, just as the believing Israelite who could see the Lord's meaning in the touching token—as that Israelite would accompany with earnest heart the priest as he made confession over the victim's head, and would feel that his guilt was figuratively transferred to this innocent substitute; so it is for us to confess our trespasses over His head who is the propitiation for the sins of the world, and on whom the Lord hath really laid the iniquities of us all. And if we do this—if we make the deliberate transference of our guilt to this all-sufficient substitute—like the Israelite who saw the trickling blood of the one victim, and felt, "Surely there is a sacrifice for sin: let this blood be for mine;" so, looking to the wounded, dying Surety, we can securely feel, "This is not the blood of bulls or of goats, but a better sacrifice. This is the precious blood of God's only and well-beloved Son, shed for many. Let it flow for me. Jesus! be thou my righteousness—be thou the reparation for my sin." And then, as the Israelite saw the strong man leading the other goat away into the wilderness, and gazed with interest after them till they disappeared in the grey horizon, and felt, "There! the sin is away into a land not inhabited. It is lost—forgotten; if sought for, it cannot again be found;" so, if you sincerely transfer your sin to the

Saviour, the Lamb of God will take it away. It will vanish from God's sight. It will be counted as if it had never been. You will be dealt with not only as one who has made expiation, but as one in whom there is no iniquity. You will be, in God's sight, as innocent. That sin will never be punished in you which the Son of God hath atoned for, and which the Lamb of God hath taken away.

ADORATION.

The heart is the noblest part of human nature, and God says, "My son, give me thine heart." And just as the affections are the noblest ingredient in human nature, so the elevation and happiness of a human being mainly depend on the right bestowment and ample exercise of these affections. To be self-sufficient and self-seeking—that is, to keep all the affections to one's self—is the meanest and most miserable predicament a *creature* can be in. The homestead of a finite spirit—much more the desolate chamber of a sinful heart—does not contain resources enough for its own blessedness. The soul must go out from itself if it would find materials of joy. It must love its neighbour, or it must love the works of God, or it must love its family, or its circle of friendship, if it would not be absolutely dreary and forlorn. And just as the soul's happiness depends on going *out* from itself, so its elevation depends on its going *up*. It must set its affections on something higher than itself—something nobler, or holier, or more engaging.

The main part of true religion is the right bestowment of the affections. When these are set on the things above

—on God, and on Jesus who sitteth at God's right hand—they are set as high as a seraph can set his. They are set so high that they cannot fail to lift the character along with them, and make his a peculiar life whose ends in living are so lofty. A self-forgetting devotion to some noble earthly character has exerted a refining and elevating influence on many. Veneration for some illustrious sage has sometimes quickened a sluggard into a scholar, and enthusiastic attachment to a high-souled patriot has been known to kindle up an idler into a hero. But there is only One of character so lofty, and of influence so transforming, that love to Him will convert a sinner into a saint. Such a One, however, there is, and it is the business of the Gospel to make Him known.

When required to love the Lord with all their heart and soul and strength and mind, many feel as if they were asked to perform an impossibility. So vague and general are their notions of the Great Jehovah, that they feel much the same as if they were asked to love the principle of gravitation, or as if they were bidden bestow all their heart and mind on a fixed star, or as if they were invited to lay up treasure in a cloud, or told to set their affections on infinite space. I appeal to yourselves,—Have not many of you felt something of this sort? The command, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart," has it not often fallen on your ear in comfortless tones, rather as the funeral knell of your earthly affections than as the joyous summons to a present and attainable blessedness? Have you not rather felt it as a command to kill your earthly delights, than as an invitation to superadd a delight

beyond them all? Have you not felt that the nearest approach to obedience you could make would be to cut in sunder the cords that bind you to the earth, and, seeing that you cannot love One so utterly beyond your conceptions, that you had better cease to love altogether?

This is the tendency of some books and systems. To love an abstract and impersonal God is Platonism. It is mysticism; but it is not Christianity. The God whom the Gospel bids us view, and whom Jesus bade us love, is not a distant power nor a dim abstraction. He is not a mere presence, nor a mere principle. He is not the most vague of all diffusions, and the most general of all general laws. But he is "the living God,"—of all beings the most truly living; possessing, in intensest measure, all that is truly excellent, and which has won our veneration in our fellow-men; combining in Himself all that goodness which has ever arrested, or affected, or entranced us, in the objects of our earthly admiration; not only wiser than the wisest, but more loving than the most affectionate—taking a kinder and wiser interest in us than the friend to whom, perhaps, we have devoted our earthly all, and more present with us than the most anxious friend can be. This Living God—possessing perfections at whose outburst the eye of an archangel is dazzled—possesses also that power of special condescension and individual interest which can make Him, to any one, most truly a Friend and a perfect Brother. If you be on a right footing with Him, a footing of friendship and loyalty, He is omnipotent, and able to devote the same regard to all your interests as if immensity contained nothing else to

attract His notice. He is omniscient, and able to keep you more constantly in His eye, and bear you more continually in His loving thoughts, than you are able to watch over the child, or to think of the friend that is dearest. And though He be "a consuming fire,"—though there be that in His holiness which is burning antipathy to sin—there is nothing in this holiness to hinder the humble soul from reposing on His faithfulness as securely as meekest brow ever rested on the fondest father's bosom. In the only aspect in which mortal eye can view him—in the person of Immanuel—the Living God draws near and says, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy strength and with all thy mind." Thou shalt love—not Fate—not Providence—not Eternity—not Immensity—not Goodness—it is not even said the Deity—but, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God,"—the God of the Bible—the great I AM—the Living God—Jehovah—the most majestic, yet most loving and most lovely of all beings—thou shalt love the Lord with all thy soul. Love Him of whom the earth saw, not merely a living, but an incarnate, representation in the person of Jesus Christ.

Whatever pantheists and mystics and transcendentalists may pretend to the contrary, and whatever a theology tinctured by these human notions may daily teach, if we would love God at all, we must look to the God of the Bible. It may be difficult to love the "First Cause" of the philosophers, or the Divine Essence of the schoolmen, or the far-off abstraction of the mystics,—but to love Immanuel, God with us, surely this is possible. By the door

of the incarnation to get into some knowledge of God, and so into some love; surely this is possible. To perceive the friendly disposition of the High and Holy One, even towards our wretched and guilty selves, is possible, when we look to the co-equal Son pouring out His blood a ransom for many. To apprehend His gentle and benignant bearing towards His own is easy when we look at John on the bosom of Jesus,—yes, John on the bosom of God. And to see how much, not only of awful majesty and spotless sanctity, but how much of genial goodness and sweetest loveliness, how much of truest tenderness and heart-attracting graciousness there was in the Son of Mary, and yet doubt whether the living God be worthy of our love; dear brethren, which of you will answer,—This is possible? "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the Word of Life; (for the life—the Living One—was manifested, and we have seen Him,) that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full."

It is a simple truth,—but oh that its starry letters sparkled in every eye!—would that its daily echo haunted every ear! The incarnation is as truly our door of entrance into all right knowledge of God as the atonement is our passport to heaven. The living person of Jesus is our theology as truly as the finished work of Jesus is our righteousness. We can reach no heaven except that

which Immanuel bought for us, and we can know nothing of God except that which Immanuel is to us. But all that Immanuel was or is, all this the ever-blessed Godhead is; and ours is New Testament divinity and ours is Christian worship, when in Jesus Christ we recognise "the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty."

And having discovered—so far as finite powers and this dim world admit of—what the true God really is, cultivate each reverent and trustful and admiring disposition toward Him. Study His perfections on very purpose to enkindle praise, and when any fair scene in creation makes your heart right glad, or when any marvellous event in Providence solemnizes your spirit, let the thought of the Omnipotent Creator and Ruler convert it into present adoration. In the various revolutions of your worldly lot, and the changeful moods of feeling, let the recollection of the Divine perfections, and recourse to the living God, be the instant asylum of your soul. Are you weary with the world's boisterousness: with the rough and high-handed ways of ungodly men? seek the calm sanctuary of God's own presence. "Though a host encamp against me, one thing have I desired of the Lord—that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple. For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion; in the secret of his tent shall he hide me." Are you damped by the disappointment of some hope, or the downfall of some joy

which you have long been rearing? Think of the permanence of God, and the perpetuity of those joys which are at His own right hand, and in which He himself is part; and learn to build your blessedness on the Rock of Ages. Are you shut out from engagements which once were very sweet—society, recreations, and pursuits, in which you could indulge without satiety, and with ever-growing zest? Learn to live upon God, and, like that prisoner of the Lord who beguiled her ten years' captivity with psalms, and who declares that the heavenly society of her cell made "its stones look like rubies,"[1] try to sing!—

"How pleasant is all that I meet,
From fear of adversity free;
I find every sorrow made sweet,
Because 'tis assign'd me by Thee.

Thy will is the treasure I seek,
For Thou art as faithful as strong;
There let me, obedient and meek,
Repose myself all the day long.

My spirit and faculties fail;
Oh! finish what love has begun,
Destroy what is sinful and frail,
And dwell in the soul Thou hast won.

Oh, glory! in which I am lost,
Too deep for the plummet of thought,
On an ocean of Deity toss'd,
I am swallow'd, I sink into nought.

Yet lost and absorb'd as I seem,
I chant to the praise of my King;
And though overwhelm'd by the thought,
Am happy whenever I sing."

Do you grieve for the fickleness of man, and mourn

[1] Madame Guyon.

over friendships which have dried like summer brooks? If the fault be not your own, think of the unchanging Friend whose mercy is in the heavens, and whose kindness is unaffected by the influences which make such havoc in the affections of earth. Do you feel the flesh failing? Then say, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. My flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever." Do you begin to wonder what is to become of your own mouldered dust and that of many dear to you, when long ages have slipped away, and the inscription on your tomb is a dead language? Do not err, forgetting the Scriptures. Think of the great power of God. Remember who hath said, "I am the Resurrection and the Life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." And thus, whatever be the grief, the vacancy, or fear, learn to find the antidote in God.

THANKSGIVING.

Adoration is devout emotion awakened by the thought of what Jehovah *is*,—the praise of the Divine perfections. Thanksgiving is delighted meditation on what the Lord has *done* for us or others—praise for His mercies. Such praise is "comely." Just as there is meanness in constant murmuring, so there is a gracefulness and majesty in habitual gratitude. And it is "pleasant." It is not the full purse and the easy calling, but the full heart, the praising disposition, which makes the blessed life; and of all personal gifts, that man has got the best who has received the

quick-discerning eye, the promptly-joyful soul, the ever-praising spirit.

And, my dear friends, in searching for the materials of gratitude, you have not far to go. If you have a lawful pursuit—a business to which, with a clear conscience, you can devote your energy—and a possession which raises you above the woes of penury; if you have contentment within, and affection around, you are a wealthy and a favoured man. Your daily lot may well be your daily wonder; and when other texts are exhausted, you may find a theme for thanksgiving in your very home—a Hosanna in the blazing hearth, and a *Jubilate* in each joyful voice and merry sound that echoes through your dwelling. But there are signal mercies, memorable interpositions, and marvellous deliverances, which should be signalized by memorable thanksgivings. Remarkable interpositions are rare, but that life is rarer in which there has been no remarkable rescue, no signal interposition of Providence. Just see. Is there any one here present whose life has moved so smoothly that no accident ever endangered it, and that he cannot quote the time when there was but a hairbreadth betwixt him and death? The boat was upset, but you were saved. You intended going by the vessel that foundered at sea, but were unaccountably hindered. You passed along, and three seconds afterwards the tottering wall crashed down. You still preserve the hat that was grazed by the bullet, or the book that received the shot instead of yourself. And how did you feel at the time? When you fell from the precipice, or were thrown headlong from your startled steed,

and rose uninjured, did all your bones say, "Who is like unto thee, O Lord?" When you just escaped the fatal missile, was gratitude to your gracious Preserver your first emotion, or did you merely thank your stars, and congratulate yourself on your singular luck? And when the active arm saved you from drowning or from being crushed to death in the crossing, when deposited on the place of safety you were pale, or you laughed wildly, or you clung to the arm of your deliverer, for the danger was dreadful; but have you since praised the Lord for *His* goodness, and for His wonderful work in saving you then? And do you adoringly remember it still? "Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord."

Then, further, there are moral perplexities and painful dilemmas; times of heart-trouble and fearful foreboding, followed by times for thanksgiving. "I love the Lord because he hath heard my voice and my supplications. The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me; I found trouble and sorrow. Then called I upon the name of the Lord; O Lord! I beseech thee, deliver my soul. Gracious is the Lord and righteous; yea, our God is merciful. I was brought low and he helped me. Return unto thy rest, O my soul! for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee. For thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling." You were in some desperate crisis of your history, and unless the Lord had made bare His mighty arm, you saw nothing for it but disaster, confusion, and disgrace. But in that vale of Achor the Lord

opened a door of hope. He raised up friends unlooked for, or sent supplies unhoped for, and step by step He opened up a gentle path, till you found yourself in a large place, and at gladsome liberty. And "what shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all his people. I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the Lord."

And the crowning mercies—the sweetest and the surest —the most precious and most lasting—have you tasted spiritual mercies? Then "blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ; according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love." Have you heard of the Saviour? Then "thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift." Have you found the pardon of sin? Then "bless the Lord, O my soul! and forget not all his benefits, who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who, as far as the east is from the west, so far hath removed my transgressions from me." Have you the lively hope to light you on your way through life? Then "blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, reserved in heaven for us." Have you found the promises fulfilled? "Blessed be the Lord that hath given rest unto his people, according to all that he promised.

There hath not failed one word of all his good promise." Have you received an answer to your prayers? "I will praise thee, for thou hast heard me, and art become my salvation. I called upon the Lord in distress: the Lord answered me and set me in a large place. O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever."

It is written of that seraphic Christian, Joseph Alleine, "Love and joy and a heavenly mind were the internal part of his religion, and the large and fervent praises of God and thanksgiving for His mercies, especially for CHRIST, and the SPIRIT, and HEAVEN, were the external exercises of it. He was not negligent in confessing sin, but praise and thanksgiving were his natural strains; his longest, most fervent, and hearty services. He was no despiser of a broken heart, but he had attained the blessing of a healed and joyful heart." And this is indeed the most blessed life—the most uplifted—the most impressive and most heavenly. The Lord wills His people to be happy. He has provided strong consolation for them, and He desires that their enraptured praises and joyful lives should speak good of His name. Dear brethren, aspire at habitual thankfulness. Covet earnestly a life of prevailing cheerfulness and praise. Seek to have your souls often brimming over with holy gladness. Bring them into broad contact with every happy thing around you—not with every mad and foolish thing—but with everything on which God's countenance shines, and in which His joy-awakening Spirit stirs. Rejoice with a rejoicing universe. Rejoice with the morning stars, and let your adoring spirit march to the music of hymning spheres.

Rejoice with the jocund Spring in its gush of hope and its dancing glory—with its swinging insect-clouds, and its suffusion of multitudinous song; and rejoice with golden Autumn as he rustles his grateful sheaves, and claps his purple hands, as he breathes his story of fruition, his anthem of promises fulfilled—as he breathes it softly in the morning stillness of ripened fields, or flings it in Æolian sweeps from lavish orchards and from branches tossing bounty into mellow winds. Rejoice with infancy as it guesses its wondering way into more and more existence, and laughs and carols as the field of pleasant life enlarges on it, and new secrets of delight flow in through fresh and open senses. Rejoice with the second youth of the heaven-born soul, as the revelations of a second birth pour in upon it, and the glories of a new world amaze it. Rejoice with the joyful believer when he sings, "O Lord, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortest me. Behold, God is my salvation." Rejoice with him whose incredulous ecstasy has alighted on the great Gospel secret; whose eye is beaming as none can beam, save that which for the first time beholds the Lamb; whose awe-struck countenance and uplifted hands are evidently exclaiming, "This is my beloved and this is my friend." Rejoice with saints and angels, as they rejoice in a sight like this. Rejoice with Immanuel, whose soul now sees of its travail. Rejoice with the ever-blessed Three, and with a heaven whose work is joy. "Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye righteous; and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart."

IX.

BIBLE INSTANCES.

"The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."
JAMES v. 16.

SOME have no turn for poetry, and others have no taste for science. Many have no aptitude for argument and dissertation, and no comprehension for abstract statement. But almost all men have an avidity for history. And what is history? It is truth alive and actual—truth embodied—truth clothed in our kindred clay. It is knowledge, not afloat on the mist-bounded sea—the shoreless abyss of speculation—but knowledge coasting it in sight of the familiar landmarks of time and place; knowledge anchored to this human heart, and coming ashore on this our every-day existence. It is the maxim of the book made interesting—the lesson of the pulpit or the desk made simple and delightful, by being read anew in living men. It is the grace made lovelier, and the attainment made more hopeful, by its exhibition in men of like passions and like affections with ourselves. The human spirit craves for history, and the Bible meets this craving. The half of it is history; and we shall devote this morning to

some names of prayerful renown—Bible instances and their modern parallels.

1. The first we quote is ENOCH. He walked with God. The conception we form of him, from what the Bible tells us, is, that his was a life of delightful communion and constant devotion. He had discovered the living God, and from the moment of that discovery could date his blessed life. So correct was his view of the Divine character, that he was irresistibly drawn towards it in confidence and love. So vivid was that view that he never forgot it, and so influential that it completely altered him. He "came to God;" "he walked with God;" and "he pleased God." "Every sacred engagement was performed with a holy alacrity. Every call to worship was welcomed as it came, from its inviting him to contact with 'the Father of spirits.' Every excursion of sanctified thought—every emotion of virtuous feeling—was sustained and encouraged, in anticipation of this intercourse, or as the result of its enjoyment. 'God was in all his thoughts.' If he looked upon the heavens, He was there; if he contemplated the earth, He was there; if he retired into his own bosom, He was there. He felt His presence pressing, as it were, upon his senses. It was the congenial element of his moral being—the atmosphere in which his spirit was refreshed. There was no terror to *him* in the great and holy name; *he* felt no tumultuary agitation, because 'God had beset him behind and before, encompassing all his ways.' The recollection of this was rather a source of sacred and animated pleasure; it invested everything with a new property; it disclosed to him the spiritual essence that

pervades the universe; and thus gave him ever to feel as within the circle of the sublimest satisfactions."[1]

And so, my friends, do you seek Enoch's introduction to the living God. *Go* to Him, as Enoch went, believing that He is, and that He is accessible.[2] And seek to get to the same just and realizing knowledge of Him that Enoch got. He is revealed to you more amply, perhaps, than he was to Enoch. *Believe.* Believe that He is not afar off, but nigh. Believe that He is not hostile, but propitious. Believe that He is all that Jesus said—that He is all that Jesus was—and, believing this, *walk* with Him. Admit Him into your home, that He may hallow it. Admit Him into your hourly occupations, that He may elevate and expedite them. Admit Him into your happy moments, that He may enhance them; and into your hours of anguish, that His presence may tranquillize and transform them. Let His recollected presence be the brightness of every landscape—the zest of every pleasure—the energy for every undertaking—the refuge from every danger—the solace in every sorrow—the asylum of your hidden life, and the constant Sabbath of your soul. Learn—with all reverence for His greatness, but with equal reliance on His goodness—learn to make the eye that never slumbers the companion of your nights and mornings; and the ear that never wearies—make it the confidant of your weakness, your solicitude, your ecstasy, and woe. Learn to have not one life for God and another for the world; but let your earthly life be divinely directed and divinely quickened—let every footstep be a walk with God.

[1] Binney on Hebrews xi., pp. 89, 90. [2] Heb. xi. 6.

2. There was no prophet in Israel like unto MOSES, whom the Lord knew face to face; and, like all the conspicuous characters of Scripture, Moses was a man of prayer. He, too, had been introduced into a peculiar acquaintance with the living God, and, from the memorable interview at the burning bush, there always rested on him an impress of that high fellowship to which he had been admitted. It was not only when the brightness of some recent interview lit up his countenance with new and painful glory; but on his habitual look there lingered that blended benignity and majesty which, once seen in the aspect of Jehovah, its memorial might always be seen in himself. The Lord had heard Moses' prayer;[1] and if He had not shown him all His glory, He had at least made all His goodness pass before him; and from that moment when, hidden in the mountain-cleft, the cloud swept over him, and the pulses of encircling power and sanctity thrilled through him, no conviction lodged deeper in Moses' mind, and no element of influence told more constantly on Moses' character, than the assurance that "the Lord is merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth." The secret of the Lord was with him; and surely it is important to know how one who knew the Lord's mind so well, and with whom the Lord so spake, face to face—how such a one was wont to pray. And I think you will notice these things in Moses' prayers:—(1.) A *hopefulness* which felt that no moment was too late, nor any depth of misery too profound, for prayer. When brought to a stand-still on the Red Sea

[1] Exod. xxxiii. 1.

shore; when almost poisoned by the waters of Marah; when like to be swallowed up by the fierceness of Amalek; it was all the same. Moses had instant recourse to the arm of Jehovah, and that arm brought salvation. And, in a case more daunting still—when successive sins had made the people outlaws from the covenant and its mercies; when they erected the golden calf; when Korah and his company rebelled; when Miriam was struck with leprosy; when the fire of God was sweeping through the camp; when the burning serpents were darting death and consternation on every side; these rapid plagues, the wickedness of the people, and their wild dismay, which would have made another leader "faint," only made Moses pray. He recollected "the Lord merciful and gracious, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin;" and, when other hearts were sinking, he still could "hope in God's mercy," and his hopeful prayers were ever procuring fresh forgiveness. (2.) And, besides this expectancy of mercy, this confidence of being heard, you may notice a holy *urgency* in Moses' prayers. How he pleads with God! How firmly he takes his stand on the Divine perfections and the special promises, and with what security he argues from them! "Lord, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? Wherefore should the Egyptians speak and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath and repent of this evil against thy people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to

whom thou swarest by thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it for ever." And that other time, when the Lord threatened to annihilate the murmuring people—"And now, I beseech thee, let the power of my Lord be great, according as thou hast spoken, saying, The Lord is long-suffering and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and by no means clearing the guilty. Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people, according unto the greatness of thy mercy, and as thou hast forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now. And the Lord said, I have pardoned, according to thy word."

From Moses, learn to pray and never faint. However awful the exigency, however near the destruction, and however abused past mercy may have been, still resort to Him whose power is beyond all exigencies, and whose pity is more prompt than our repentance. And from Moses, learn to glorify God, by pleading in prayer His perfections and His promises. That prayer will bring an absolute answer, which has for its foundation the Lord's absolute assurance; and, in the absence of a positive promise, that prayer will procure some mitigation or some mercy, which makes cordial mention of the Lord's goodness and loving-kindness. Remember the word unto Thy servant, upon which Thou hast caused me to hope.

3. Passing on to the "man after God's own heart," we find, of human models, the most perfect specimen of prayer. It is not so much the frequency of his devotional

exercises, though these were seven times a day; nor the memorable returns which these prayers procured, for the prayers of Elijah and others may have brought about more miraculous results—may have drawn down, in the world's eye, more stupendous returns; but it is that DAVID was so signally a man of prayer, and that his prayers, in themselves, are so pre-eminent. He prayed without ceasing, and with all prayer, in everything making known his requests, and in everything giving thanks. Taking possession of his new house or retreating from it, on the eve of battle and in the flush of victory, among the sheep-cotes and in the mountain-pass, on the tented field and in the trading town, in the shepherd's hut and on the monarch's throne, in the full height of spiritual joy and in the depths of guilty misery—we find him still the man of prayer. And these prayers have in them everything that enters into our idea of what prayer should be. David's was the darting eye that could catch upon the wing the fleetest of nature's phantoms and the swiftest flights of man's imaginings; and the divining eye that could detect the passion ere it mantled on Doeg's swarthy cheek, or read the cunning scheme ere it glanced from under Achitophel's contracted brow. And his own soul was the well-tuned harp on which, from the deep notes of dull and doubtful feeling up to the shrillest tones of ecstatic bliss or woe, the diapason sounded the full compass of all the emotions which this harp of thousand strings is able to express. And whilst his soul was thus susceptible and his eye thus quick, in his hand he held a poet's pen, and could transfer into equal words each intuition of his ranging eye, and each aspiration of

his yearning heart. And when you recollect that all this glowing fancy and earnest feeling and creative diction were the clothing of a spirit to which Jehovah was the chiefest joy—by which the living God was known and loved, adored and trusted—you can see how the Book of Psalms must ever be the completest manual of devotion.

(1.) From David, learn in everything to pray. Learn to ask God's blessing on little things as well as great. There is nothing which it is right for us to do, but it is also right to ask that God would bless it; and, indeed, there is nothing so little but the frown of God can convert it into the most sad calamity, or His smile exalt it into a most memorable mercy; and there is nothing we can do, but its complexion for weal or woe depends entirely on what the Lord will make it. It is said of Matthew Henry, that "no journey was undertaken, nor any subject or course of sermons entered upon; no book committed to the press, nor any trouble apprehended or felt, without a particular application to the mercy-seat for direction, assistance, and success."[1] And, on a studying day, he writes, "I forgot explicitly and especially when I began to crave help of God, and the chariot-wheels drove accordingly."[2] It is recorded of Cornelius Winter, that he seldom opened a book, even on general subjects, without a moment's prayer.[3] The late Bishop Heber, on each new incident of his history, or on the eve of any undertaking, used to compose a brief Latin prayer, imploring special help and guidance. No doubt such a prayer preceded the composition of his famous poem

[1] Life, by Sir J. B. Williams, p. 211. [2] Tong's Life of Henry, p. 60.
[3] Jay's Life of Winter, p. 256.

"Palestine." At least, after it had gained the prize, and been read in the ears of applauding Oxford, when the assembly had broken up the successful scholar could nowhere be found, till some one discovered him on his knees, thanking God who had given him the power to produce that poem, and who had spared his parents to witness and share his joy.[1] A late physician of great celebrity used to ascribe much of his success to three maxims of his father, the last and best of which was, "Always pray for your patients."[2]

(2.) From David, learn to give thanks in everything. "Every furrow in the Book of Psalms is sown with seeds of thanksgiving."[3] Many of the Psalms are songs of vigorous and continuous praise—"O give thanks unto the Lord!" and others which begin with grief and confession and complaint, presently rise up into gratitude. Praise is the believer's seemliest attire; and those have been the most attractive Christians whose every-day adorning was the garment of praise. It is mentioned of the famous Moravian, Count Zinzendorf, that "in his very aspect might be discerned the blessedness of a heart sprinkled from an evil conscience with the blood of the Lamb. He looked for nothing but good from the Lord, in whom he delighted; and every subject of thankfulness, however inconsiderable it might seem to others, was important and interesting to him."[4] "I am surrounded with goodness, and scarcely a day passes over my head but I say, Were it not for an *ungrateful heart*, I should be the happiest man

[1] Life of Heber, quarto, vol. i. p. 33.
[2] Memoir of James Hope, M.D., p. 51.
[3] Jeremy Taylor.
[4] Life, pp. 508, 509.

alive; and *that* excepted, I neither expect nor wish to be happier in this world. My wife, my children, and myself in health; my friends kind; my soul at rest; and my labours successful: who should not be content and thankful if I should not? O my brother, help me to praise!"[1]

(3.) From David, learn to delight in God, and so to view each scene in creation, and each event in providence, in God's own purest light. God was his chiefest joy, his sure and ascertained Friend; and every scene was pleasant where God's presence was enjoyed, and every object interesting in which aught of God's glory could be seen. He felt Jehovah's tread in the shaking wilderness and the quivering forest. He saw Jehovah's chariot in the rolling cloud, the eddying tornado, and the wheeling water-spout. He heard Jehovah's voice in the thunder-psalm and in ocean's echoing chime. He heard it, too, in the hum of leafy trees, and in the music that trickled down the mountain's side. He recognised Jehovah's frown in the splitting rocks and smoking hills; and he hailed Jehovah's smile in the melting tints of morning, in the laughing joy of harvest-fields, in the glancing roll of sun-steeped billows, and the plunging gambols of leviathan, as he played his ponderous frolics there.[2] Every touch of pathos or power passed away a heavenward melody from the Æolian harp of his devotional spirit; and not content with these strains of constant adoration, on some occasions you can see him mustering all his being for some effort of ecstatic worship,

[1] Fuller's Life of Samuel Pearce, p. 36.
[2] See Psalms xxix., lxv., civ., cxlviii., etc.

and longing to flame aloft a holocaust of praise. Describing the change which came over his own feelings from the time that he knew God in Christ, President Edwards says, "The appearance of everything was altered; there seemed to be, as it were, a calm, sweet cast or appearance of Divine glory in almost everything. God's excellency, His wisdom, His purity, and love, seemed to appear in everything; in the sun, and moon, and stars; in the clouds and blue sky; in the grass, flowers, trees; in the water and all nature, which used greatly to fix my mind. I often used to sit and view the moon for continuance; and in the day spent much time in viewing the clouds and sky, to behold the sweet glory of God in these things; in the meantime singing forth, with a low voice, my contemplations of the Creator and Redeemer. . . . My mind was greatly fixed on Divine things, almost perpetually in the contemplation of them. I oft walked alone in the woods and solitary places, for meditation, soliloquy, and prayer, and converse with God. . . . Prayer seemed to be natural to me, as the breath by which the inward burnings of my heart had vent."

4. And to take only one instance more—"the man greatly beloved." DANIEL was a busy statesman. Darius had made him his chief minister. He had charge of the royal revenue, and was virtual ruler of the empire. But amidst all the cares of office he maintained his wonted custom of praying thrice a day. For these prayers nothing was neglected. The administration of justice was not standing still; the public accounts did not run into confusion. There was no mutiny in the army, no rebellion in

the provinces, from any mismanagement of his. And though disappointed rivals were ready to found an impeachment on the slightest flaw, so wise and prompt and impartial was his procedure that they at last concluded, "We shall find no occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God." He found leisure to rule the realm of Babylon, and leisure to pray three times a day. Some would say that he must have been a first-rate man of business to find so much time for prayer. It would be nearer the truth to say that it was his taking so much time to pray which made him so diligent and successful in business. It was from God that Daniel got his knowledge, his wisdom, and his skill. In the composure and serenity which these frequent approaches to God imparted to his spirit, as well as in the supernatural sagacity and forethought and power of arrangement which God gave in direct answer to his prayers, he had an infinite advantage over those men who, refusing to look up to the Father of lights, vex themselves in vain, and who, when the fret and worry and sweltering of their jaded day are ended, find that they have accomplished less, and that little far more painfully, than their wiser brethren who took time to wait upon God. The man must be busier than Daniel who has not time to pray, and wiser than Daniel who can do what Daniel did without prayer to help him. Daniel was in a place where prayer was eminently needful. He was in Babylon—a place of luxury and revelry,—and from his position in society he was peculiarly exposed to the idolatrous and voluptuous temptations around him. It was difficult, and ere long it

was dangerous, to maintain his singularity. But so far as there was any seduction in the mirth of that jovial city, prayer kept him separate; and so far as there was any danger in withholding countenance from its idol-orgies, prayer made him bold. Though the clash of the cymbal and the shouts of the dancers were coming in at the window, they did not disturb his devotion; and though he had not forgotten the king's decree and the lions' den, he did not close the lattice nor try to conceal his faith and his worship; and, secure alike from spiritual detriment and personal danger, the Lord hid His praying servant in the hollow of His hand.

Among the elegant forms of insect life, there is a little creature known to naturalists, which can gather round it a sufficiency of atmospheric air; and, so clothed upon, it descends into the bottom of the pool, and you may see the little diver moving about dry and at his ease, protected by his crystal vesture, though the water all around and above be stagnant and bitter. Prayer is such a protector; a transparent vesture, the world sees it not; but, a real defence, it keeps out the world. By means of it the believer can gather so much of heaven's atmosphere around him, and with it descend into the putrid depths of this contaminating world, that for a season no evil will touch him: and he knows where to ascend for a new supply. Communion with God kept Daniel pure in Babylon, and nothing else can keep us safe in London. In "secret of God's presence" you may tread these giddy streets, and your eyes never view the vanity. You may pass theatres and taverns, and never dream of entering in. You may

get invitations to noisy routs and God-forgetting assemblies, and have no heart to go. Golden images, public opinion with its lion's den, and fashion with its fiery furnace, would never disturb you. A man of prayer in this mart of nations, you could pass upon your way unseduced and undistracted, a Christian in Vanity Fair, a pilgrim in a paradise of fools, a true worshipper amidst idolaters, a Daniel in Babylon.

And so far as this is a world of distress and danger, prayer is the best defence. So Daniel found it in the den. So his three friends found it in the fiery furnace. And so you, my friends, will find it in the real or fancied perils of this mortal life. "The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it and is safe." An asylum ever open, the ejaculation of an instant will land you in it, and nothing is evil which befalls you there. By the Omnipotent help which it at once secures, prayer is strength in weakness and courage in dismay. It is the buoy which rides the roaring flood, the asbestos-robe which defies the devouring flame. It is the tent in which frailty sleeps securely, and anguish forgets to moan. It is the shield on which the world and the wicked one expend their darts in vain. And when panic and temptation and agony are all over—whether wafted by Sabbath zephyrs, or winged by scorching flames; whether guided by hymning angels, or dragged by raging lions; whether the starting-point be Patmos, or Jerusalem, or Smithfield, or Babylon—it is the chariot which conveys the departing spirit into a Saviour's arms.

X.

RETROSPECT.

"Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit."
EPH. VI. 18.

WHAT then is prayer? Is it penance? Is it so much holy drudgery, to which every one must force himself, under pain of incurring a severer penalty, or sinking at last into a deeper woe? Is it the irksome ordeal through which you are doomed to enter each successive day, and the mournful *finale* with which you must close it up and leave it off?

Yet I am sure that it is in this sombre aspect that many look on prayer. Are you sure that this is not the aspect in which you yourself regard it? Is it not a task—an exercise—an endurance? Instead of engaging in it with that alacrity, or resorting to it with that avidity which would bespeak the privilege, do you not betake yourself to secret prayer with coldness and self-constraint, and feel, when the devotions of the family or sanctuary are ended, that it is a great comfort to have this other "duty" done?

What, then, is prayer?

1. It is communion with God. O brethren, prayer is not an apostrophe to woods and wilds and waters. It is

not a moan cast forth into the viewless winds, nor a bootless behest expended on a passing cloud. It is not a plaintive cry directed to an empty echo, that can send back nothing but another cry. Prayer is a living heart that speaks in a living ear—the ear of the living God. It matters not where the worshipper is. On a dreary shore; in a noisome dungeon; amidst the filth and ferocity of brutal savages, or the frivolity and atheism of hollow-hearted worldlings; surrounded by the whirr and clash and roaring dissonance of the heaving factory, or toiling in the depths of the lamp-lit mine—the man of prayer need never feel the withering pangs of loneliness. Wherever you are, the Lord is there, and it only needs prayer to bring Himself and you together. Recollect Him, and He is beside your path; resort to Him, and He lays His hand upon you. And who is this ever-present Help, this never-distant Friend? Words cannot tell. The incarnate "Word" *did* tell, but few could comprehend, and as few could credit. If you imagine the tenderest affection of your most anxious friend; the mildest condescension and readiest sympathy of your most appreciating and considerate friend; and if you add to this a goodness and a wisdom such as you never saw in the best and wisest of your friends; and if you do not merge but multiply all this wisdom, all this goodness, and all this kindness towards you by infinity, so as to give this tender and constant Friend infinite knowledge to watch over you, infinite forethought to provide for you, and infinite resources to relieve or enrich you; if you did not fully realize who the hearer and answerer of prayer is, you would, at least, be a

step beyond that unknown God, whom many ignorantly and joylessly worship. In prayer you do not address a general law or a first principle, but you address a living person. You do not commune with eternity, or with infinite space, but you commune with the Father of eternity; with Him "who fills the highest heavens, and who also dwells in the lowliest hearts." You do not hold converse with abstract goodness, but with the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; with God in Christ; with Him whose express image Jesus is; with Jesus himself; with your Friend within the veil; with your Father who is in heaven.

Yes, brethren! whatever you may fancy—or rather, whatever you may forget—the Lord liveth. There may be objects which fascinate your soul, and bind in welcome fetters all your faculties; but hidden from your view there is an object, did you catch one glimpse of Him, fit to deaden the deliciousness of every lesser joy, and darken the glare of every lesser glory. There may be friends deep-seated in your soul, but there is yet one Friend, whom could you but discover, He would make you another man—He would give your life a new nobility, your character a new sanctity. He would give yourself a new existence in giving Himself to you, and would give society a new manner of person in giving you to it. And with this glorious personage, and withal most gracious Friend, it is possible to keep up an intercourse to which the most rapid communication and the closest converse of earth supply no equivalent. The twinkling thought, the uplifted eye, the secret groan, will bring Him in an instant;

will bring Him in all the brightness of His countenance through the midnight gloom, in all the promptitude of His interposition through the thickest dangers, in all the abundance of His strength into the fading flesh, and in all the sweetness of His sympathy and the assurance of His death-destroying might into the failing heart. And this communion, closer and more complete than that of any creature with another; for dearest friend can only give his thoughts, and desires, and feelings—he cannot impart himself. But in regard to the praying soul and this Divine communion, we read of its being "filled with all the fulness of God."

2. Prayer is peace and joy. Two things constitute the believer's peculiarity, and make him differ from the rest of men—just as two things constitute the sinner's peculiarity, and make him differ from the rest of God's creatures. The two things which form the Christless sinner's peculiar misery, are *guilt* and *vacancy*—a gloom above him and a void within him. A gloom above him: for he has no confidence in God; he has no hopeful and confiding feeling heavenwards, no firm reliance on a reconciled God, and no smiling vista through a pervious and heaven-disclosing sepulchre. A sense of sin, in shadowy hauntings or in severe and burning incubus, is lowering over his conscience; and whether it merely mar his occasional joy, or convert his days into habitual misery, this guilt, this conscience of sin, is a serious abatement on the zest of existence, a mournful deduction from the total of earthly happiness. It makes the unpardoned sinner's walk very different from the seraph's limpid flight, who

only knows guilt by distant report, and very different from the newly-pardoned sinner's lightened gaiety, who knows it only by remembrance—breaking his daily bread in the sprightliness of a vanished fear, and eating it with the relish of a virtual innocency. But not only is there a gloom above the Christless sinner—a brooding guilt, and an impending danger; but there is a void within him God did not create man at first with that burden on his conscience, and neither did He create him with this aching gap in his bosom. Or rather, we should say the all-wise Creator has implanted no craving in any of His creatures, without having provided some counterpart object. When that object is attained, the creature is content. Its craving subsides in quiet enjoyment and complacency. It is happy, and wants no more. The ox is at home in his rich pasture, and sends no wistful thought beyond it; and so is the insect which "expands and shuts its wings in silent ecstasy" on the edge of the sunny flower. But it is far otherwise with the roaming soul of the Christless sinner. There is no flower of earthly growth in whose nectar bathing he can finally forget his poverty—no green pastures of time-bounded blessedness in whose amplitudes he can so lose himself that misery shall find him no more. Wide as is his range, his anxious eye sees too well its weary limits; and sweet as the honeyed petals are, he perceives them dying as he drinks. Oh! this fugacity of all that is pleasant—this scanty measure and momentary duration of earthly delights, was never meant to satiate the soul of man: this never is the counterpart which the bountiful Jehovah created for the yearning avidity of an

immortal spirit. Cast into the mighty gulf of man's craving soul, a houseful of friendship, a ship's freight of wealth and dainty delights, a world-load of wondrous objects and lovely scenes,—the deep-sounding abyss will ever echo, "Give, give;" and though you could tumble the world itself into the heart of man, you could not prevent it from collapsing in disappointment, and dying vacant and dreary at last.

There is only one object so mighty as truly to content this capacious desire; only one ultimatum so conclusive that when once it is reached, the soul has nothing more to do than rest in it and rejoice. That object is the living God himself, that ultimatum is the all-sufficient Jehovah. The Gospel meets the two desiderata of our uneasy and anxious humanity, by offering a free pardon and an infinite and eternal possession. The affrighted and apprehensive soul finds peace where it finds forgiveness; and the yearning, discontented soul finds joy where it finds a never-dying, all-sufficient Friend. It finds them both where it finds Immanuel. The gloom vanishes and the void is filled; the query of existence is answered, and the problem of blessedness solved, when the soul ascertains what Jesus really is, and in a Saviour-God discovers its Beloved and its Friend.

Now the peace and joy of conversion it is one great use of prayer to reproduce and perpetuate. It brings the soul into the presence of that Saviour, whom in the day of salvation it found; and renewing the intercourse, it renews the joy. When prayer is what it ought to be—when it is earnest and realizing—it gives the believer

fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. It brings him in contact with those perfections of the Godhead which may at the moment be chiefly revealed to his view; and in the pavilion of prayer—beneath the canopy of the sure atonement, and on the safe standing-point of acceptance—the soul surveys the God of majesty, or surrenders itself to the God of grace; hearkens to His dreadful voice in the thunder of startling providences, or melts in sweet amazement beneath the full flood of His marvellous mercies; but from every aspect of awful solemnity or benignant endearment, the assuring thought comes home, "And this God is our own God for ever." And perhaps there is no influence so abidingly tranquillizing, so permanently hallowing and heart-assuring, as this high communion with the great All-in-All. The pleasures of sin will look paltry, and sin itself disgusting, to eyes which have just been gazing on the fountain of light. The tossings of time, mountains of prosperity rooted up, and pinnacles of fortune flung into the roaring sea, will look trivial matters to one who has eyed them in their mote-like distance from beneath the sapphire throne. And even the groans of mortality and the wailings of the sepulchre will come diluted and transformed to ears resounding with golden harmonies from the holy place of the Most High.

3. Prayer is the only means of importing to earth blessings not native to it. There are many commodities not of English growth, which ships and wealth and enterprise can fetch from foreign shores. But there are some things which no wealth can purchase, which no enter-

prise can compass, and with which no ship that ever rode the seas came freighted. Where is the emporium to which you can resort and order so much happiness? Where is the ship that ever brought home a cargo of heart-comfort?—a consignment of good consciences?—a freight of strength for the feeble, and joy for the wretched, and peace for the dying? But what no vessel ever fetched from the Indies, prayer has often fetched from heaven. Our earth is insulated. It is clean cut off from all intercourse with the most closely adjacent worlds. But even though the nearest world were peopled by holy and happy beings, and though they could cross the great gulf that severs them from us, they could accomplish little for us. They could not bind up bleeding hearts; they could not wash stains from guilty souls; they could not infuse their own felicity into gaunt and joyless hearts; and they could not transport their own sweet atmosphere so as to heal the miasma of a polluted place or the misery of a wretched home. But what they cannot do, the Lord himself can do. Prayer is recourse to the ever-present and all-sufficient God. It is frailty fleeing to omnipotence. It is misery at the door of mercy. It is "worm Jacob" at the ladder's foot, and that ladder's top in heaven. The mercy-seat is the ark of the covenant opened, and the legend over it, "Ask, and it shall be given thee;" and from the "unsearchable riches of Christ" the suppliant fears not to ask the sweetest mercies and the costliest gifts. Jacob compared Joseph his son to a fruitful tree inside of a lofty fence;[1]

[1] Genesis xlix. 22, 23, with Harmer's explanation.

but though he grew in a "garden enclosed," his growth was so luxuriant that his branches ran over the wall, and the wandering Ishmaelites and the hungry passengers shot their arrows and flung their missiles at the laden boughs, and caught up such clusters as fell outside the fence. The tree of life grows now in such a garden. There is now an enclosure round it, but the branches run over the wall. High over our heads we may perceive the bending boughs, and such fragrant fruits as "peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, assurance of God's love," "gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance" —and prayer is the arrow which detaches these from the bough—the bolt which brings these far-off fruits, these lofty clusters, down to the dusty path and the weary traveller's feet. Happy he whose believing prayer is "like Jonathan's bow, which never came empty back!"[1]

4. Prayer confers the largest power of doing good to others. "What am I to do with other people's sorrows?" The finest and the gentlest spirits are often the most heavily burdened. Many a one feels that he could pass right easily through the world if he had no griefs to carry but his own. He feels that his sensitive system is just a contrivance for catching up other men's calamities, —an apparatus on which everybody fastens his own peculiar vexation—his family theirs—his neighbours theirs—till at last he moves about, the burden-bearer of a groaning world. But after he has got himself thus charged and loaded, he knows not what to do, for he cannot alleviate the twentieth portion of the ills he knows.

[1] Gurnall.

He cannot heal all the wounds and mitigate all the poverty of which he is the mourning witness. He cannot minister to all the minds diseased, all the aching hearts and wounded spirits whose confidant he is; and in the anguish of his own tortured sympathies he is sometimes tempted to turn these sympathies outside in, and feel for his fellow-men no more. "What, then, shall I do with other people's sorrows?" The Christian feels that he has no right to be his own little all-in-all. He feels that he dares not invert the example of his Master, who was a man of sorrows very much because a man of sympathies. He remembers of whom it is said, "Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows;" and this reminds him what to do with the perplexities and disappointments and distresses of his brethren. He takes them to the throne of grace. He deposits them in the ear of the great High Priest. He urges them on the notice of One who can be touched with a feeling of infirmity, and who is able to succour them that are tempted. And in this way a believer who is tender-hearted enough to feel for his brethren, and who is so much a man of prayer as to carry to the mercy-seat those matters that are too hard, and those griefs that are too heavy for himself, may be a greater benefactor to his afflicted friends than an Achitophel who has nothing but sage counsel, or a Joab who has nothing but a stout arm to help them—than a man of fortune who can give nothing but his money, or a man of feeling who has nothing but his tears. The Christian has his near relations and personal friends. Parents and children, brothers and sisters, husbands and

wives,—God has bound them very closely together, and made it impossible for the joy of one to be full, if another's joy is incomplete. Besides these, there are friends not of one's house; kindred spirits, whom God, in creating, or the Spirit of God, in new-creating, has made congenial with your own: those to whom you are drawn by the affinity of identical tastes, or by the discovery of those mental gifts and spiritual graces, which cannot be hid, and which cannot be seen without attracting you. Now, one way to sanctify such friendships is to make them the materials and the incentives of prayer. For example, there may be seasons of spiritual languor when you have little heart to pray. The throne of grace seems distant or uninviting. A deep sloth has seized the inner man. You are not inclined to ask any blessing for yourself. You are too carnal to confess any sin, and too sullen to acknowledge any mercy; perhaps so earthly or atheistical that you do not pant, nay, do not breathe, after God, the living God. At such a season of deadness you will sometimes find that you can pray for others when you cannot for yourself.[1] Do even so. Make your solicitude for them a motive for prayer. Begin by laying their wants before the Lord, and you will soon find out your own. Come in their company, and you may soon find yourself left alone with God. This is not to desecrate prayer, but to consecrate friendship. It exalts and purifies affection, and by making it friendship in the Lord, makes it more lasting now, and more likely to be renewed hereafter.

And lastly, intercession sanctifies the believer's relation

[1] Sheppard's Thoughts on Private Devotion.

to the Church. "Our Father" makes all of us who are in Christ one family. But this, too, is oft forgotten. There is little family love amongst us yet; little instinctive affection resulting from our common adoption into the circle of God's dear children; little of that affection towards one another which our Elder Brother feels towards every one; little outgoing of sympathy because one Comforter animates us all. If the family relation of the household of faith be ever realized, it is in social or intercessory prayer. Abba, Father—my Father truly, because Father of my Lord Jesus Christ; but if so, Father of many more—Father of the whole believing family—"Our Father, which art in heaven," and so the circle widens, till, starting from the individual, or his own little band of immediate brotherhood, it includes all whom the arms of Immanuel enclose. One who was much given to intercessory prayer writes thus to a Christian friend:—"I beseech you to seek earnestly the communion of saints. This is the only progress I have made in the Divine life. I have received, as a most precious and unmerited gift, the power of feeling the things of the flock of Christ as if they were my own. You cannot imagine the happiness of this feeling. I dedicate an hour every evening to prayer, and principally to intercession. I generally begin with the thanks due to God for having made Himself known to us as our Father, for all that He has done for every one of His sheep on that day. It is impossible for me to tell you the great delight of thus mixing myself up with the people of Christ, and of considering their benefits as my own. The thought which transports me the most, is that of how many souls have been,

perhaps, this day joined to the Church! how many succoured under temptation! how many recovered from their backslidings! how many filled with consolation! how many transported by death into the bosom of Christ! I then try to pray for that sweet 'we,' and to think of the necessities of my Christian friends. Besides, I have a list of unconverted persons for whom I wish to pray."[1] And if there were more of this spirit, how it would alter the tone of Christians to one another! Instead of being so censorious and uncharitable, it would make us feel, "Am I not my brother's keeper?" Instead of a fault-finding, it would make us a fault-forgiving and a fault-healing Church. It would make us suffer with the suffering members, and exult with the rejoicing. It would make us like that high-souled apostle who had "continual heaviness" for his unconverted kindred, and who yet never wanted topics of consolation; remembering without ceasing in his prayers his believing brethren, with their work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope.

[1] Memoir of Miss M. J. Graham, second edition, pp. 375, 376.

A MORNING BESIDE THE LAKE OF GALILEE.

PREFACE.

THE forty days betwixt the resurrection and ascension of Christ were a transition period, during which, by occasional manifestations and habitual withdrawment from their sight, He was training His apostles for a life of communion with an unseen Saviour. Amongst these manifestations there is none more significant, nor better fitted to illustrate His own assurance, "Lo, I am with you alway," than the interview beside the Sea of Tiberias, which is recorded in the supplemental chapter of St. John. Interposed betwixt the Gospels and Acts, it leaves no chasm, but, straight along the level, from the labours of the Master, it conducts us to the ministry of His servants; and, the cloud which received Him notwithstanding, it helps us to understand how He still is present with His people.

That closing chapter of St. John supplied the materials of ten discourses which the author delivered to his own congregation last autumn. The interest which he himself felt in the subject appeared to be shared by a friendly audience; and, believing that there are many readers to whom the theme at least will be welcome, he has ventured on the present publication.

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I.

THE LAKE OF GALILEE.

"After these things Jesus manifested himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias."—JOHN XXI. 1.

FROM Mount Moriah a rugged path leads down to the valley. The night was clear and cool—the first week in April—and every footstep was fragrant; for the thyme and the rosemary had newly fetched up that incense which each successive spring earth yields to her Maker; and deep down in the hollow murmured a stream which told that the vernal rains were not long over and gone. From the city there rose into the sky a misty light, as from a festival; but whatever might be the stir and excitement in the streets, with white cliffs and shadowy ravines, Olivet, lonely and silent, looked down on it all.

The Passover was finished, a new ordinance had been instituted, a hymn had been sung, and now the little company was descending this path—the temple behind them, Gethsemane before them—a sad and anxious company; Jesus, sublime in His resolute purpose and far-seeing sorrow, His attendants weak with dim apprehension and that mysterious forecast, which we all know so well, of coming calamity. Nor was it reassuring when such words broke the silence—"All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and

the sheep shall be scattered. But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee."

You know the sequel. You know how, in language the warm expression of his own attachment, although not sufficiently considerate of his brother apostles, Peter again and again protested, "Though all shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended." "Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee." And you know how he kept his promise. You know how his ardour carried him a little further than the rest; how, when the others fled, he followed as far as to the high priest's palace; but you know how there his courage gave way; how, at the first challenge, he exclaimed, "I am not his disciple;" and how, at last, with oaths and execrations, he declared, "I know not the man."

A month has passed on; a month which to the world has given a risen Redeemer, which to all the apostles has given again their Master, which to Peter has brought forgiveness and reinstatement in the loving-kindness of the Lord. And now the time of Christ's ascension is near. It is a calm, sweet morning in May, and they are beside the lake of Galilee. Seven of the eleven apostles have been up all night, toiling, as it turned out, for the last time, at their old vocation of fishermen, with no success, till Jesus joined them, and in a single sweep filled their net so full that they could not draw it. The last meal that they and He had all taken together, was on that night so much to be remembered,[1] and since then "all things

[1] On his fourth appearance (Luke xxiv. 42) He ate not *with* but "before" them; and Thomas was absent.

were made new." Sin had been expiated, God's sacrifice on behalf of a sinning world had been offered, and the kingdom had come—the reign of God in the midst of men. And so there—not in the Holy City, nor under the shadow of Moriah, but far off, on the heathen border, in "Galilee of the Gentiles"—Jesus meets his destined Evangelists; and in the whole incident there is something significant, we might almost say symbolic. They are engaged in their lawful calling, when the Master accosts them; teaching us that Christ is not ashamed of His servants because their employment is homely, or because they wear the coarse garb of the fisherman. But in that calling even experienced hands, habituated to the lake and proficients in their craft, have no success till their Master directs them where to find; teaching us in all our ways to acknowledge a higher wisdom. The race is not always to the swift; and unless the Lord Himself fill the net, the scholar, the trader, the statesman may toil all night, and catch nothing.

Yes; "the morning has now come," and it is very lovely. Nor is it merely that the lake is glass; it is not merely that the blossomed oleanders, like willowy roses proclaim the plenitude of summer; it is not the promise of plenty in the ripening barley and leafy orchards round them; but their world is new. Their future is unknown; His precise designs and purposes their Master has not yet unfolded; but it is enough. He Himself is here,—in His countenance no sorrow now: on His spirit no sore pressure such as human friendship can neither share nor understand. And as, with gunwale still wet and slippery,

the boats are beached—as on the pebbly strand the embers have gone out, and their repast is finished, although a working day, it feels so Sabbath-like; for, radiant in resurrection life, rich in that calm rest into which He has entered, no longer so careful to veil His glory, the Master is in the midst; and although little has yet been spoken, it seems as if all the holiest seasons of the last three years had come again, with a nearer heaven intermingled. It is the Lord. He lives. He dieth no more. And it is thus that He looks: so concerned for His people's welfare, so glad to provide the meal for the tired and hungry boatmen, so benignant toward their happiness: "Come and dine." Yet the movements so miraculous: His sudden appearance, the surprising draught of fishes, the repast so strangely provided; in His graciousness such majesty, His very sweetness so awful, that none could be intrusive, nor "durst" any one break the silence, and put in words the question rising to his lips, "Who art thou?"[1]

But the silence ends, the reserve is so far broken. Peter already knows that he is forgiven, but with Divine considerateness the Lord Jesus is desirous of setting him right with his brother apostles, and with Divine wisdom the Head of the Church purposes to found something on his very fall. So when the meal was ended, and the time was come for free and friendly converse, the Lord addressed Himself to Peter. The very question was so shaped as to recall to Peter's mind his rash and arrogant avowal, "Although all men deny thee, yet will not I:" "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?"—implying,

[1] See Note A.

"Son of Jonas, not long ago you boasted, that if these others denied me, you loved me so much more than they, that there was no fear of you. What say you now? Do you love me more than the rest?" And to the question thus put, very beautiful in its meekness is Peter's answer. He is too humble now, and too modest, to make any comparison, but he must come out with the truth, and to the Searcher of Hearts he appeals, "Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee;" and, accepting the declaration, Jesus replies, "Feed my lambs." 'I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not; now thou art converted, strengthen weak brethren. Take for thy special charge those who are still weak in the faith; let love find its outlet in feeding my lambs.'[1]

Then a second time He said it—not because He doubted the truth of the avowal, but in order to intensify and emphasize the exhortation which that avowal elicited,—"Feed my sheep." And not without an obvious allusion to Peter's threefold denial, Christ's question was a third time repeated,[2] and the third time it was charged on the apostle, "Feed my sheep;" and a presentiment was given him of the martyrdom which he should incur in the service. Then it would appear as if with the words, "Follow me!"—words which at first, and three years before, had summoned him to discipleship, and which now finally called him away from the fishing-boat to more exalted functions—it would seem as if with these words the Lord Jesus had made a movement to arise and go thence, and Peter had literally followed. But there was another disciple

[1] See Note B. [2] See Note C.

who made the self-same movement; and turning round, and seeing John also follow, the old Peter gleamed out for a moment, as he asked, 'And what is to be his destiny? He volunteers to follow: is there also a cross for *him?*' a question which was rebuked in the reply, 'What is that to thee? Should he escape all violent hands, and live on to the close of the dispensation, what is that to thee? Follow thou me!'

In this touching incident the first thing which strikes us is the grace of the Lord Jesus. Penitent as Peter was, it was needful to set him right with his brother apostles, whom he had first of all wronged by his forwardness, and next scandalized by his fall; and how admirably is this accomplished by the question, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?"—a question to which Peter replied so humbly, as to show that he claimed no pre-eminence even in affection,—but so earnestly, that fellow-servants could not refuse the avowal which sufficed for the Master.

So, in correcting any fault, in pointing it out, in trying to cure it—nay, in forgiving it, and trying to set the offender right with his fellows, there is need for holy skill and tenderness. Whatsoever other causes may have contributed, there can be little doubt that fierce denunciations have often aggravated slight doctrinal errors into chronic and deliberate heresies; just as a harsh, unsympathetic treatment has first discouraged the returning backslider, and at last driven him off into a sullen dislike of what he deems a high-pitched and unfeeling hypocrisy.

But if we cannot hope to emulate the discrimination which through Peter's rashness still recognised his love, and when we read the message of the newly-risen Saviour, "Go and tell my brethren, AND Peter," as well as the interview before us, if its Divine dexterity, its superhuman delicacy fills us with despair, we may at least copy the tender touch and holy handling which did not break the bruised reed, but so bound up and strengthened Peter's crushed affection that it was stronger than before—no bruised reed, but a very trump of God, when a fortnight afterwards the Holy Spirit blew through him that Pentecostal blast, and they that were in their graves heard the voice—three thousand dead in trespasses looked up and saw the Christ of God, and began to live for ever.

A second lesson is the Saviour's wisdom in the selection of His agency. In that same apostolic band there was another to whom we might have expected that the Lord would have said, rather than to Peter, "Feed my lambs: feed my sheep." For depth of insight, for exalted spirituality, for that swift and sympathetic intuition which is the prerogative of love and like-mindedness, for symmetry of character, who can compare to Zebedee's younger son? Nay,—

> "He was like the moon,
> Because the beams that brighten'd him pass'd over
> Our dark heads, and we knew them not for light
> Till they came back from his."[1]

Was he not the most Christlike in the company?—and

[1] Adapted from "Balder."

are there not many traits of the Master, which we seem to know best by their reflection from this beloved disciple? Yet although he is the disciple whom the brethren love, and although he was the disciple whom Jesus loved, in the work of planting the Church and first preaching the gospel he was not put forward like that other who made so many false steps, and who had been repeatedly rebuked for his rashness.

For this there was a reason, not only in Peter's experience, but in the very make of Peter's mind. In all ages you will find, that although deep thinkers may sway the thoughtful spirits round them, yet, in order to be popular, men must be frank, open, fervid, and must abound, not so much in the finer feelings, as in those which are shared by the most of their fellows. Thus, last century it was not the devout and gentle Doddridge, but the impetuous Whitefield, who shook England from end to end. Thus it has not been Leighton, or Binning, or any such sequestered saint or seraphic thinker, who has made his mark on Scotland, so much as a real flesh-and-blood reformer—a participator in the caustic national humour, scornful of superstition, sardonic toward all mere sentiment, reverential only to the Word of God. And thus, in the fatherland, it was not Melanchthon, with his fine taste, his correct logic, his clear and careful statements, his beautiful and balanced piety, but it was Luther, with his startling paradox and sublime excess—Luther, with that mighty heart of his, which is still the most living thing in Germany—Luther, with those burning words which, picked up and heated anew by men who,

like Goethe, have little heart or faith themselves, still make such excellent thunderbolts—it was Luther, whose noisy impetuosity roused all Europe, and brought down in dusty ruin a third part of the mystic Babylon. And so the men of taste, the lovers of the correct and the beautiful, must often stand aside and allow God's work to go on through agencies which, if they do not altogether like them, it is evident that He himself has chosen, and which are plainly the best adapted to the world as it is.

Still, let it not be forgotten that for the other class the great Head of the Church has a place and a function. John did not preach sermons at the close of which thousands were pricked to the heart, and exclaimed, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" but neither did Peter write—even under Divine guidance it would not have been congruous to him to have written—such a Gospel as John's, or such a treatise as John's First Epistle —an Epistle and Gospel through whose refracting atmosphere the Sun of Righteousness is kept from ever setting on our world—into which we cannot look, but the very Godhead looks at us, Immanuel in His own light thence shining, because first received into the pellucid, waveless mirror of the narrator's loving mind.

If we were more devoted to the Master we should have less dislike to any fit and faithful servant. After all, the thing that *tells* is truth in love,—God's own truth spoken by one who loves *it* and who loves *Him*, and who loves the souls of men—contagious truth, truth that has taken hold of what is characteristic in our mental constitution, and conformed it to its own likeness. In one of the

Polar voyages, they made a lens of ice. They took the clear, crystal cake, and polished convex either side, and then, when held in the sunbeams, without melting itself, it would ignite the taper or set the fagot on fire. But for such frozen mediums there is no place in Christ's service. Before giving any one commission to teach or to preach, He asks, "Lovest thou me?" Candidate for the ministry, conductor of the Sabbath class, lovest thou me? It is an awful thing to be only the artist—the mere lens of ice transmitting what you yourself do not feel. In order to be the evangelist, you must be the burning and shining light; and if, according to the gift given, there is love—it may be a taper in the chamber, or a beacon on the mountain-top—a smoking furnace, or a pure and perfect flame—but it will be in keeping with the natural character, and it will be by Christ enkindled; zeal as well as knowledge, benevolence as well as truth, a *burning* and a *shining light*.

When their Master's need was at the sorest, none of the disciples acted out and out the part of the noblest and most self-devoting friendship; but there were two whose fall is most conspicuous—the one having betrayed Him, the other having with oaths and execrations repudiated all connexion with Him. Both fell, but the one fell to rise no more; the other was not only recovered, but fully reinstated in the confidence of his brethren and in the favour of his Lord. What made the difference? It all arose from this:—There never was a time when Judas really loved his Master. To the appeal, "Judas Iscariot, lovest thou me?" he never could have answered,

"Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee." Ah, no! he loved the money, he loved the present world, he loved the praise of men; but he never truly loved his Master. Peter did. Truly and tenderly, and with all the vehemence of his honest and ardent nature, he stood by his Lord; and although, in a fatal hour, his faith faltered, and, in the storm of temptation, his love went down and disappeared, it still was there, and soon came up again in an outburst of shame and repentance. And so, the mere professor of religion may fall and never be recovered. The name to live was all he had, and, now that this is lost, there is nothing to raise him up, or bring him back again. But you who are vexed with yourself because of your discomfitures and downbreaks—you who say, "I had better give up, for I am not getting on. Every new start is sure to be followed by another stumble. And it is not only new temptations, but the old sins over again. I despair of pardon. I despair of ever growing better"—think of Peter. Think of all those who, like Peter, have not only been forgiven seven times, but seventy times seven. And if, to the demand of the heart-searching Immanuel, "Lovest thou me?" you can answer, "Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee," His long-suffering mercy will not only pardon but cure you; and, called to a fresh career of discipleship, and a new trial of faith and affection by that word, "Follow me," your diseases will be healed, your soul will be restored in the paths of righteousness, and you will be upheld by the Lord whom you follow.

II.

THE NIGHT WHEN THEY CAUGHT NOTHING.

"That night they caught nothing."—JOHN XXI. 3.

CHRIST'S attendants were hard-working people. Some of them, like the sons of Zebedee, might own a little property; and Matthew, as a farmer of revenue, had once the chance of growing rich. But it does not appear that any of them had ever been men of wealth, or in what we should call independent circumstances; and, at the time of this incident, it is likely enough that the dishonesty of their late purse-bearer had swept away their ready money, and reduced them to an unwonted poverty. At all events, when, in obedience to their risen Master's bidding, they had gone before Him into Galilee, the first time that He came up with them He found seven of them on the water fishing. It was morning, and they had been out all night, but they had been utterly unsuccessful. And what does that mean? You angle for amusement, and after a long day, when your friends meet you returning, and ask, "What sport?" you exhibit your empty basket, and can bear to be bantered for your lucklessness or want of skill. But the poor boatman says, "I go a-fishing," because there is no food in the house, or because there is an account to pay, and no money to meet

it; and when the morning dawns on his empty deck, it is hard to go home weary, and sleepy, and hungry, and know that his own vexation on the deep must be repeated in the disappointment of those who tarry on the land. "We have toiled all night and caught nothing." There is nothing for Simon's wife to make ready,—nothing for Simon himself to carry to the market at Capernaum, and convert into pence and shekels; and, after this wakeful night, it cannot be a working day. We hardly realize the case, but the Lord Jesus understood it well. For years He had mingled with these men, and was thoroughly acquainted with their privations and their hardships, and had shared their narrow lodging and their homely fare; and as He now espied the empty vessel making for the shore, He knew that in yonder light boat were heavy hearts, and He prepared for them a wonderful surprise. "Children, have ye anything to eat?" was His inquiry, as He hailed them from the shore. "No," was the reply—the curt monosyllable of weary and disappointed men; but "Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find," was the answer of one whose kindness is not easily repulsed, and whose precept usually involves a promise: "Cast the net, and this time ye shall find;" and when the sweep was finished, and the seine was drawn to shore, they found that they had made a little fortune. A meal was ready for them on the strand; a hundred and fifty-three[1] "great fishes"

[1] The Fathers and mediæval writers find in the number of these fishes various mysteries. For example, Theophylact suggests that the Gentiles may stand for a hundred, and the Jews for fifty, whilst the doctrine of the Trinity is obviously indicated by the three. Τοὺς ἐξ ἐθνων ἑκατόν εἴποις ἀν, ἀλλὰ καὶ οἱ ἐξ Ἰσραὴλ οἳ πεντήκοντα νοηθειεν· οἱ δὲ τρεῖς τὴν εἰς τὴν ἁγίαν τριάδα

tumbled and struggled in the straitening net: and to crown their joy and turn their mourning into dancing, there was no need to ask their benefactor and their host, "Who art thou?" for now that they were beside Him, their eyes confirmed what the wonder hinted:—"It was the Lord,"—it was their Master come again.

And what may be assumed to be the meaning of the miracle? When we think of the timing of it—as one of the final flashes, one of the last forth-lettings of His grace and power before He disappeared from mortal sight—does it not tell us that wherever disciples toil their Lord looks on? Does it not tell us that in their common calling, however humble, His servants are the objects of a Saviour's sympathy, and that when they have laboured hard and long without success, He is not indifferent to their disappointment? And when one effort has failed after another—when they have toiled all night and caught nothing, does it not tell them that they have a Friend who can direct them on what side of the ship to cast the net, so that after many balks and failures, the last throw shall enclose a multitude of fishes?

1. The lot of Christ's disciples is usually a life of toil. In this there is little difference betwixt the Christian and the worldling; if anything, the difference is in the world-

πίστιν δηλούσιν. But Augustine is much more ingenious. There are ten precepts in the Decalogue, and there are seven operations of the Holy Spirit; these added together are seventeen. But the series, 1+2+3+4, up to 17, is exactly 153:—"Sic adde, et invenis numerum sacrum fidelium atque sanctorum in cœlestibus cum Domino futurorum."—(*Sermo* ccxlviii. 4; and the same idea is elaborated in several other sermons of the same group.) No wonder that with tart disdain the clear mind of Calvin dismisses all such speculations as child's-play: "Si quis propius expendat, reperiet puerilem esse lusum."

ling's favour. The Christian is constrained to keep the king's highway, the beaten path of industry and straightforward honesty, and cannot shorten the journey by leaping fences, or trying an occasional near-cut through his neighbour's property. His conscience is a hard taskmaster, and insists that every penny shall be fairly earned. The consequence is, that almost all the disciples of the Saviour now on earth are carrying the yoke, and are toil, toil, toiling. By far the greater number are working with their hands. In fields and factories, in workshops and kitchens, in mines and fishing-boats, bending over the forge, feeding the blast-furnace, you find them: rising early, plying their monotonous task, the big drops often trickling down their brow, and youthful energy fast evaporating into a meagre and infirm old age. And others you will find whose task is partly manual or mechanic, partly or chiefly mental. One teaches the young—hires out his head and heart to enkindle intelligence, or transfuse his own refinement into minds which are often, alas! incapable, for employers who are, alas! frequently unthankful. Another grapples with disease. Through the bleak December night, with bleared eyes from broken slumber, he goes to throw away his own health in warding off the stroke of death, or mitigating the paroxysms of some excruciating malady. A third fights his country's battles. Away from wife and children, he marches through the putrid swamp, lodges on the frozen or the flooded field, associates with comrades rough, reckless, and uncongenial, and, his life in his hand, mounts the breach, volcanic with destruction, and quivering with gory swaths mown down

in mortal agony. A fourth is a trader. A solitary adventurer, or a son of Zebedee in partnership with others, his property is afloat, and what with his dependence on others, what with the dangers of the deep and the tempests overhead, what with the fluctuations of the atmosphere, and the fickleness of the cunning prey he longs to capture, perhaps for a continuance his is as toilsome a lot as any, and in the storms which from time to time arise, it is often absolute agony. An omnipotent Master might have made it otherwise. Even on earth He could have emancipated His servants from this drudgery. He might have made His Church a pleasure-garden or a place of elegant and uninvaded repose. But His wisdom—or, what is the same thing, His kindness—has judged that it is not good for man to be idle. And not only is it best to be busy, but a great deal of labour must be irksome. There is much of it that won't set to music, much of it that won't make a picture, much of it that won't tie up in bouquets and posies. There is much of it that, do what you will, is positively disagreeable—not pastime at all, but downright discipline, going quite against the grain, needing self-denial. The boatman may have his moonlit voyage, and his merry song occasionally; but to toil all night is hard—to wake when others sleep is not so pleasant; nor is there much pleasure in scaly planks, and slippery ropes, and wet tarpaulins, and an extinguished fire, and leaking timbers, and an unbroken fast, when the morning dawns on empty nets, with comrades cross at their unsuccessful fishery.

2. For, secondly, the toil of the disciple is not always successful. Conceding what we ourselves have often

urged—conceding that Christianity is itself an element of success,—that by the clearness which simplicity lends to the eye, and the soundness which temperance imparts to the system,—that by the elasticity which the good hope infuses into the spirits, and the entanglements from which principle preserves the conscience and the character; conceding that Christianity goes far to promote the lawful ends of the labourer, mental or manual, Christianity is far from guaranteeing against all possible failure or defeat. If for probationary purposes Infinite Wisdom has refused to make the Church on earth a play-ground or pleasure-garden, for the same reason He has refused to make it the infallible avenue to worldly wealth, the sure and certain passport to earthly rank or renown. A ship manned by good Christians, a concern in which none are embarked but disciples, may toil all night and catch nothing. A God-fearing operative may meet with some accident which disables him for life, and which throws him on the kindness of others. A pious servant may lay up a good foundation for old age, and in the sinking of some bank or joint-stock company her frugal savings may be suddenly swallowed up. A Christian hero may have saved an empire, or with the latch of his living arm behind the door may have bolted out the foe, and in the moment when a grateful nation is ready to crown the conqueror, a stray missile may strike the laurel from his brow, and may intercept the hosanna ere it reach his ear. A conscientious trader may have foregone many a self-indulgence, may have cut off the right arm of some ruling passion, or plucked out the right eye of some favourite taste or

propensity, in order to owe no man anything, and yet provide things honest in the sight of all men; he may have curtailed his rest, abridged his holiday, and worked his mind till the brain was fire, and every nerve flashed lightning; and when the night was far spent he did enclose a glorious spoil, and felt that he should now be rewarded for his patience and his pains. How the floats dance and quiver with the living load! How all the surface swirls and jabbles with the eddying shoal? How, like subaqueous ingots, they flash their sides of gold and silver! and now that mesh over mesh and coil over coil the hempen snare is coming up, oh! what a haul! what a provision for the loved ones! what a happiness at home! But something has snapped. Is it possible? Oh, mercy, mercy! the net is broken! To think of it—such a take, and so near the land, and all again scattered in the depths of the sea!

3. Now, of this calamity the Great Eye is witness, and with this bitter grief the Great Heart sympathizes. It is not willingly or wilfully that He sends such an affliction; and as this incident teaches, if we take the Master's bidding, we shall yet be gainers by this loss—for this delay or disappointment we shall at last be all the richer.

Perhaps it may be made up in some eventual temporal gain. Like the disciples who were rewarded for a night of abortive effort by a marvellous draught at the unlikeliest time—the morning,—so, if undisheartened by disappointments you abide in your calling, the Master may at last point out in His providence the side of the ship on which, if you cast the net, you shall enclose a great

multitude of fishes. The success is the most precious and permanent which is won after many reverses—the crown which a Bruce obtains after he has been twelve times defeated—the Eddystone pillar which is reared cautiously, skilfully, solidly, after one and another have been swept away, and which holds aloft for a hundred years its towering torch through tempests such as its flimsy predecessors never witnessed. Do not lose heart. There is no special or absolute promise; but there is a great general principle, and an extensive actual experience. On the side of industry, integrity, and perseverance, there are not only the wishes and the prayers of all good men, but there is the course of God's own providence; and if, with hopefulness and energy, you do not succeed at last, it is only because the problem takes too long for man's short life and feeble strength to reach in every case the solution.

But in any case, the Lord will provide. Had even that throw of the net brought nothing from the lake, the Master had a meal prepared already on the land. So take His bidding. Ply your calling, and if that calling fails to yield you food and raiment, you may fearlessly cast yourself on that all-embracing care and kindness by which the ravens are fed and the lilies are clothed.

> "Set thou thy trust upon the Lord,
> And be thou doing good;
> And so thou in the land shalt dwell,
> And verily have food."

In real truth, however, it can never be said of a disciple, in the discharge of his duty, that he toils all night and takes nothing. He may not catch precisely that for which

in the first instance, he sweeps or dredges, but the net never comes up empty. If it does not popple and welter with fishes, it is full of good lessons and instructive experiences; and no disciple will say that the night was a bad one when Christ comes in the morning. "O gainful loss! O wondrous grace!" as good Mr. Williams of Kidderminster wrote in his diary, after heavy losses in trade, "Oh how wise and gracious is my heavenly Father! How sweetly doth He overrule afflictive providences to my great advantage and comfort. Surely I find my heart improving and growing hereby in submission to the will of God, delight in God and in duty. For long I have been trying to say, 'Thou art my portion, O Lord.' At last, finding that nothing less would satisfy the desires of my soul, and believing that the Lord himself had stirred up these desires, and therefore, if I were willing, He could not be unwilling, I ventured, though with a trembling heart, to say, 'Thou art my portion, O Lord.' Thereupon joy like a tide came rolling in, and got possession of my soul; and I was quickly able, in the confidence of faith, to repeat the aspiration. My mind is full of it, and it puts life and vigour into every grace."

Should there be present any one suffering from worldly reverses, we venture to say, that there is nothing like confronting the full reality. There are many worse ills than poverty, and not many greater evils than an unblessed prosperity. Let us not be the victims of a senseless fashion, or of our own foolish anxiety to keep up appearances; but, meekly bowing to a stronger and a wiser will, we shall soon learn how to be abased, as well as how to

abound. And, what is not a little remarkable, if in the man there is anything really good or great, he will come out grander—he will show more sublimely in the valley of humiliation than on the pinnacle of mere earthly promotion. His heart is likely to be more tender, his walk with God closer, his conscience more scrupulous, his sympathies more lively, his discharge of duty more thorough. Nay, paradoxical as it may seem, with lessened means he may actually do greater good, and with a store sadly diminished, he may have actually less of carefulness or fear for the future. And, like one who has lived all his life in a garden, but who is amazed to find what beautiful flowers bespangle the open heath or the thoroughfare, latent endearments and neglected sources of enjoyment may acquire such new beauty and sweetness, that he shall marvel that he prized them so little before, and paid so dear for very paltry substitutes. Above all, religion may grow more genuine, prayer more earnest, the soul's interests more urgent, the Saviour more precious; and, although the toil may be severe, and the fare may be homely—though, after hard labour in the open air and on the hungry lake, you come home, to find nothing but "a fire of coals and fish laid thereon, and bread,"—when you think who provided the repast, and who presides at the board, it will taste like angel's food. The words of Jesus, "Come and dine," will make it a miraculous feast, and you will not grudge the hours of toil which end as you wish the toilsome night of life itself to end—in the society of the Saviour, and where, instead of the question, often so trying, so tantalizing, "Children, have you any

meat?" you shall find yourself sitting down at the table which He himself has prepared.

More especially does this miracle carry a message to the "fishers of men."

"Full many a dreary anxious hour,
We watch our nets alone,
In drenching spray, and driving shower,
And hear the night-bird's moan.

At morn we look, and nought is there;
Sad dawn of cheerless day!
Who then from pining and despair,
The sickening heart can stay?"[1]

But be not discouraged, thou faithful preacher—thou patient, persevering missionary. The coyest fish may be caught at last,[2] and the net which has been let down a hundred times in vain may at last surround a multitude. Even at this moment, when you are ready to abandon the work in despair, He who has all the time been a witness of your toil may be sending to the right side of the ship a shoal unseen by you, but on which He keeps His eye,—a people at last made "willing in His day of power,"—and at whose accession your mouth shall be filled with laughter and your tongue with melody.

[1] Keble.

[2] "An old man in Watton, whom Mr. Thornton had in vain urged to come to church, was taken ill and confined to his bed. Mr. Thornton went to the cottage, and asked to see him. The old man, hearing his voice below, answered, in no very courteous tone, 'I don't want *you* here; you may go away.' The following day the curate was again at the foot of the stairs. 'Well, my friend, may I come up to-day and sit beside you?' Again he received the same reply—'I don't want *you* here.' Twenty-one days successively Mr. T. paid his visit to the cottage, and on the twenty-second his perseverance was rewarded. He was permitted to enter the room of the aged sufferer, to read the Bible, and pray by his bedside. The poor man recovered, and became one of the most regular attendants at the house of God."—Rev. W. R. Fremantle's *Memoirs of Rev. Spencer Thornton.* Second edition, p. 84.

III.

JOY COMES IN THE MORNING.

"Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord."
—JOHN XXI. 7.

THROUGHOUT His public ministry the Lord Jesus was constantly surrounded by His apostles. For nearly three years they were the companions of every journey, and, attending Him day by day, had it been needful, they could have told how every hour was filled up, and could have recorded night after night every place of His sojourn. But after His resurrection He had no personal attendants. He preached no sermons, He fed no multitude, He healed no diseases, He went to no festival, He visited no house of mourning; but where or how the forty days and forty nights anterior to His ascension were spent, no one could tell, nor does it seem as if any one had tried to conjecture.

Ten or eleven times during that interval He was seen by His former friends; and of these various appearances a primary object was to give infallible proof that He had burst the bonds of death, and returned from the grave's dominion. These successive appearances did not cease till the anxiety as well as the incredulity of affection was abundantly satisfied; till the sceptical Thomas could

cavil no longer; till every former associate was prepared to spend his years and lay down his life in proclaiming the all-important fact—"the Lord is risen."

In these interviews another object was to give final instructions to the propagators of the gospel and the planters of the Christian Church. Many of the things which formerly they could not bear He told them now; nor was it until He "had given commandments unto the apostles whom He had chosen" that He "was taken up."

But in these successive appearances there was a further purpose, and you will find it very instructive if you look somewhat carefully at the mode and circumstances in which they took place.

Not only was Christ risen—to all practical effects He was already "taken up." No one knew the place of His abode. To search for Him was vain. In neither temple nor synagogue was He any longer to be found; Bethany could give no account of Him; in that garden, of which it is said, "He oftentimes resorted thither," He was never seen again. Yet, though unseen, He was not absent. He had only gone out of sight; He had not gone away;[1] and it is interesting to observe how, from time to time, He made His presence palpable. It was the third day after His decease, and in Joseph's garden a lowly follower, near the empty sepulchre, is weeping in bewilderment of sorrow. Aware of some one near her, but, in a world where there was only One she wanted, scarcely caring to see any other, she answered his question, and he might have gone away again, and the tear-filled eyes and absent thoughts would never have surmised the Saviour. She

[1] See *Lessons from the Great Biography*, pp. 309-312.

would just have still supposed that the man who addressed her was the gardener, had he not spoken again in that very voice which once on a time had made herself a new creature, and the like of which was not to be heard in earth or heaven. That afternoon two friends are travelling out into the country. A stranger joins them. Wonderfully intelligent, with a flood of unprecedented illumination making the Bible brilliant, chasing the sadness from their spirits, and making their bosoms burn with such mysterious fervour that they are no longer stumbled at their Master's sufferings, and in the death of Jesus begin to see the dawn of Messiah's glory; they still have no suspicion of the speaker, till from their "holden eyes" He sweeps the veil, and in that moment vanishes. The apostles are assembled. They are listening to the tale of Cleopas and his breathless comrade. They know not what to make of it. Such "strange things" are happening. Jesus is not in the sepulchre, and it almost looks as if God were not in the world—when they are startled by the apparition of Jesus in that very room. As He says "Peace be unto you," the look and tones are His, but in their terror, they can think of nothing save a spirit. However, as He shows his hands and feet, and sits down to the simple meal, and continues His discourse, panic yields to joy, and in the sober certainty reverence and rapture grow together. His words have come true; the sepulchre is empty; their Master is again in their midst, by this time their Lord and their God; and in preaching repentance and remission of sins they have now their great errand to the world.

But of all the instances in which the risen Saviour

revealed Himself, no one is more instructive than this manifestation at the Lake of Galilee.

Two years and a half ago, this very party had spent a similar night. They had toiled till dawn, and taken nothing. Their boats had been already beached, when, with a crowd of people pressing round Him, Jesus came down to the shore, and, stepping into Simon's boat, begged that he would thrust out a little from the land. In this floating pulpit having finished His address, He bade Simon lower the net. Listlessly and languidly the weary fisher let it down, when, instead of coming home empty as before, it tumulated with burnished perch or ponderous carp, a wallowing load, to whose frantic efforts at escape the net was yielding, when the other boat pushed off, and secured the precious spoil.[1]

That morning was memorable ; for whilst it was momentary wealth to the boatmen and their families, it was also an epoch in their personal history. It was then that they left all, and became stated attendants on Jesus. And, likely enough, this other unsuccessful night brought to their remembrance the former, with its wonderful sequel. At all events, we may be sure that through the dreary hours their thoughts often reverted to the Master. On this very lake, what wonders they had seen! On that coast the demoniac dispossessed, the famished congregation fed ; on this watery expanse the tempest stilled, or His wonderful steps paced over the billows. And here He may yet be found again ; for had He not said, "After I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee"?[2]

[1] Luke v. 1-11. See Note D. [2] Matt. xxvi. 32.

Daylight comes, and fond imaginations fly. This is Galilee; but there is yet no Jesus. No one has come to them walking on the water, and now that it is morning, their boats are empty enough; but there is no excited throng coming down towards the shore, crowding and rushing and eager for more of those gracious words to which they have already been listening, and preceded by the wonderful Teacher. On that strand there is merely to be seen a solitary figure, nowise noticeable—perhaps an intending customer, come down to purchase for his morning meal; and to his question, "Any food?" they can only answer, "No." But He bids them cast the net on the right side of the ship, and now it heaves and undulates with such a heavy shoal, that it would be destruction to the meshes to lift it from the water. That other memorable morning, and that other miraculous draught, are so instantly suggested, that John says to Peter, "It is the Lord," and leaving it to others to look after the fishes, Peter plunges overboard, and is straightway with his Master.

A weary night, but Christ came in the morning. So at first we are apt to say; but it would be putting it more correctly if we said that Christ, who had been present all the night, allowed Himself to be seen in the morning. He was now risen from the dead, and had put on that glorious body which evades our grosser sense, and needs an act of will to make it visible.[1] In His ubiquitous Godhead everywhere present, at any moment or in any

[1] "After His resurrection, Christ's body was only visible by a distinct act of His will."—Chrysostom, quoted by Trench.

place He could emerge to view and reappear in corporeal guise, so that former intimacy was able to exclaim, "It is the Lord," and so that He Himself was able to say, "Reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side;" and as soon as the purpose was fulfilled, without necessarily quitting the spot, the glorified body ceased to be seen. In its escape from the sepulchre more entirely transfigured than it had been on the Holy Mount, it was only when the Lord Jesus so willed, that in flesh and blood, as of old, that body stood revealed; and when the design was accomplished, it again retired into the supersensual sphere of its habitual invisibleness.

It was "on this wise that Jesus shewed himself" when at any period after His resurrection He was seen at all. It was not by entering an apartment or by arriving from a journey, but by coming forth from the impalpable and viewless, that, whether to longing disciples or to the startled persecutor, He stood disclosed. No phantom, no mere vision; courting severest scrutiny—"Handle me and see"—and into that materialism re-embodied by His own Divine volition; the normal state of His glorified humanity was such as mortal sense cannot grasp: and just as when the body was "earthy," the thing supernatural was for His "face to shine as the sun,"[1] so now that it was "heavenly," the thing supernatural was for that body to come out appreciable by untransfigured organs—perceptible to eyes and ears which were not yet immortal like itself.

Such being the character of those manifestations of the

[1] Matt. xvii. 2; 1 Cor. xv. 40-54.

unseen Saviour recorded here and elsewhere, it is easy to see the indirect or secondary object accomplished by them. They not only proved the reality of His resurrection, but they prepared the disciples, gradually and efficiently, for that new kind of life which they were to be henceforward leading—a life associated with the Saviour's more sacredly than ever, but a life of entirely new conditions—a life in which He was to become to them at once more brotherly and more Divine, but in which memory and faith must supply the place of oral intercourse and open vision,—a life in which they who had known Christ after the flesh were thus to know Him no more,—but a life in which those who held fast His own promise, "Lo, I am with you," need perform no pilgrimage except in His company, and pass on to no region, however new or unknown, without expecting His presence.

So, after His resurrection, instead of returning to the stated society of the apostles, as before, and then at the end of forty days abruptly ascending from their midst—nay, instead of rising from the dead and taking farewell of earth on the self-same day, the Lord Jesus was content to let six weeks intervene, during which by successive appearances He was reminding disciples that, although out of their sight, He was still in their midst; and so by the easy stepping-stones of these successive appearances, He joined Calvary to Olivet. By gentle progressive lessons He prepared the daily associates of the last three years for living still more intimately in His unseen presence.

Thus, too, although it looks like a detached appendix

to the Gospel—although coming after the apparent *finis* of the verse foregoing, it starts afresh, and almost seems to say that, when he had dropped the pen, the disciple whom Jesus loved had been directed to resume, and transmit to all time this touching incident—you see what a charming epilogue to the evangelic history this chapter makes, and what an appropriate prelude to the apostolic annals. It is not only the isthmus which joins the labours of the first missionaries to the life of Jesus, but from its high eminence as we gaze on what we fancy a final flush of the Sun of Righteousness, just as we think Him in rich and tender beauty about to disappear, lo! His course again bends upward, and we find that to the happy dwellers in this region He is a Sun that sets no more.

A Saviour habitually recollected and realized was the distinctive of apostolic piety. Not to the eye-witnesses alone, but to all who believed their testimony, and to whom the Holy Spirit revealed the things of Jesus, Christ was ever present—the spectator of their conduct, the guardian of their path, the president of their home, the light of the dungeon, the solace of earth, the attraction to heaven. And we cannot read the writings or the record of their lives without feeling that of their Christianity the key-note was struck on occasions like this—perhaps this very morning; and whether feeding the sheep or following the Master—whether toiling for a maintenance or "catching men," we cannot but admire the simplicity and grandeur, the seriousness and happiness, in their deportment so blended, as of those who had never quite for-

gotten the sweet surprise at the Lake of Galilee, and to whom it might any moment again be whispered, "It is the Lord."

And whilst a true life and a thorough—oh, how delightful, through the Remembrancer's teaching, to have the great fact of Christ's presence so impressed as to fear no evil, and tamper with no sin!—motives purified, and the whole person filled with light in the pervasion of the flame-bright Eye—unity given to existence, and a centre to the soul, by the "For me to live is Christ," which responds to His own, "Follow me;"—the emancipated life of one inheriting the earth and redeemed from all evil,—the circumspect life of one whose terror is sin, and whose Master is served in the beauty of holiness,—the intent and hopeful life of one who has a calling so high, and a Forerunner so glorious.

Over Mr. Simeon's fireplace hung Henry Martyn's picture. Looking at it, he used to say, "There, see that blessed man! What an expression of countenance! No one looks at me as he does. He never takes his eyes off, and seems always to be saying, 'Be serious. Be in earnest. Don't trifle.'" Then smiling at the picture, and gently bowing, he would add, "And I won't—I won't trifle." But if the remembrance of a fervent spirit, or the image of an earnest friend, is thus fitted to arouse us, how solemnizing, how comforting, how inspiring should be the thought of that omniscient and heart-searching Spectator who sees His servants beneath the cloud of night, as well as in the cold and hungry dawn; who alike descries the feeling in an apostle's mind, and the finny flock as it wanders deep

beneath the wave; and who, with equal precision, asking a question or giving a command, "Cast the net on the right side:" "Lovest thou me?" brings to land the watery spoil—brings to light the good confession. No one looks at you as He does, and "Be in earnest—follow me," is what He is always saying.

If any one is burdened with a sense of sin, he need carry that load no longer. All power in heaven and earth is given to the world's Redeemer, and the salvation He purchased He lives to bestow. In quest of forgiveness there is no distant spot to which you need travel, no distant day for which you need tarry. That pardon you may have at once, and you may have it here. A Saviour ever-present waits to be gracious, and it only needs that you realize your own wretchedness, and withal His grace and power, in order to taste the blessedness of the man to whom it is authoritatively spoken, "Go in peace; thy sins be forgiven thee."

Is there anything you want?—anything which you do not possess, anything which you yourself are unable to perform? Christ has it, Christ can do it for you. It is a pity to toil with such dejected looks and drowsy eyes; for close at hand is One who can in a moment fill the net, and who, even if the net were continuing empty, can still feed the fisherman. As soon as the disciples were come to land, they saw that it was not for His own sake but theirs that Jesus had asked, "Have ye any meat?" for "they found a fire of coals, and fish laid thereon, and bread;" and although He allowed them to make their own addition to the banquet—"Bring of the fish which

ye have now caught"—they saw that, even if they had continued to catch nothing, their Master would not have suffered them to starve. Let us learn to trust in Him who can prepare a table in the wilderness, and who, when His people have been forced to acknowledge, "We have nothing of our own," loves to surprise them with the invitation, "Come and dine."

However, still better than the meal is the company and the converse which follows. In His Word Christ speaks to all His disciples, and in prayer He invites us all to speak to Him; and hallowed for ever will be the scene—pebbly strand or fragrant hill, lonely chamber or crowded church—where it may be given you to enjoy communion high and sweet with the Son of God and the Saviour of your soul. This is a fellowship which no believer need forego; for, in virtue of His Godhead, the Lord Jesus, if of all beings the most majestic, is withal the most condescending, and no one finds it easier to give undivided heed to a solitary suppliant than that only Potentate, whose undistracted mind administers immensity, and whose boundless essence fills the praises of eternity.

And, in looking out for the Lord Jesus, do not look too high. To the apostles it had been said by Himself and the angel at the sepulchre, "He goeth before you into Galilee." They were now in Galilee, and had seen nothing of Him yet; and if this was the time when He was about to restore the kingdom to Israel, they might naturally expect that it would be surrounded with a splendid escort, and with a crown upon His head that they next should see Him. Well as they knew Him, and much as they loved

Him, they little guessed that the unconspicuous stranger in the pale morning light was He. And so, to this hour, it is strange how the unseen Jesus disguises Himself, and (so to speak) how He is distributed.

" A poor wayfaring man of grief
Hath often crossed me on my way,
Who sued so humbly for relief,
That I could never answer, ' Nay.'
I had not power to ask his name,
Whither he went, or whence he came ;
Yet was there something in his eye
That won my love, I knew not why.

Once, when my scanty meal was spread,
He entered ;—not a word he spake ;—
Just perishing for want of bread,
I gave him all : he blessed it, brake,
And ate,—but gave me part again.
Mine was an angel's portion then ;
For while I fed with eager haste,
That crust was manna to my taste.

'Twas night ; the floods were out ; it blew
A winter hurricane aloof ;
I heard his voice abroad, and flew
To bid him welcome to my roof ;
I warmed, I clothed, I cheered my guest,
Laid him on my own couch to rest ;
Then made the hearth my bed, and seemed
In Eden's garden while I dreamed.

In prison I saw him next, condemned
To meet a traitor's doom at morn ;
The tide of lying tongues I stemmed,
And honoured him 'midst shame and scorn.
My friendship's utmost zeal to try,
He asked if I for him would die.
The flesh was weak, my blood ran chill,
But the free spirit cried, ' I will ! '

Then, in a moment, to my view
The stranger darted from disguise ;
The tokens in his hands I knew—
My SAVIOUR stood before mine eyes !
He spake, and my poor name He named :
' Of me thou hast not been ashamed ;
These deeds shall thy memorial be ;
Fear not—thou didst them unto me !' " [1]

Strangely disguised and strangely distributed : in the South Sea Islander and the ragged scholar, in the bed-rid invalid and the starving household, in the burdensome task that tries your patience, in the ungrateful pupil who makes poor requital to your pains. Still, under every mask by which faith is tested, and on which love's labour can be lavished, " it is the Lord." His is a service in which there are no failures ; His a gratitude by which nothing is forgotten. " Fear not ; thou didst it unto me."

[1] James Montgomery. See Note E.

IV.

LOVEST THOU ME?

"He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?"
JOHN XXI. 17.

A SAVIOUR, a Friend, a Master, a God—such is the great requirement of the human spirit, and it is the provision for this requirement which makes the Gospel so welcome, so glorious.

You want a SAVIOUR. You are a sinner. You have broken God's law, and, in thought, word, and deed, you are offending every day. Of this, perhaps, you are poignantly aware. If life should be the perpetual effort to please God, your life has been a continual shortcoming; if self-indulgence is sin, your life has been a long transgression; and, speaking of your depravity, you have no name dark enough to describe it. You adopt the strong words of the Psalmist, "Mine iniquities have gone over mine head; as a heavy burden, they are too heavy for me." "There is no soundness in my flesh, nor any rest in my bones, because of my sin." "I have been as a beast before thee."

Or, possibly, you are sorry that you do not feel your sinfulness more. It seems to you as if the most alarming

thing about you were your apathy, and, if you have any anxiety, it is anxiety caused by your own carelessness and easy-mindedness. You wish you were as far as the publican, so as to pray with some urgency, "God be merciful to me a sinner;" and if you ever feel a momentary trepidation, it is from the view of your own composure in the face of your habitual ungodliness and its tremendous consequences.

But, sure enough, whether tranquil or terror-stricken, whether self-complacent or self-disgusted, you own yourself a sinner, and to you as a sinner Christ comes as a Saviour. Having died to atone, He lives to pity and pardon, to intercede and to save. It is your happy lot to be under the reign of God's grace, and not more truly this morning did the day-spring roll back the dark awning of night, and let through the sunbeams, than Christ's advent has dispelled the dark frown of God's justice, and on lost humanity let through the smile of propitious Deity. "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." Have done with dreaming; from the nightmare slumber in which sinful pleasures and ghastly illusions maintain their dance of death, come forth into Christ's own sunshine. Look up into that countenance which says so benignantly, "Thy sins be forgiven thee," and, by keeping in that light, your iniquities shall be put from you, and kept away as far as the east is from the west—as far as summer noon is removed from arctic night.[1] Do you, as a sinner, accept Christ as a Saviour, and at once for your "beauteous robe" you have His

[1] Eph. v. 14; 1 John i. 7; Psalm ciii. 10-12.

righteousness, even as for His recompense He has your soul.

To the door, or rather into the dwelling of every sinner, Christ comes day by day. Each morning you awake, in His unrecalled Gospel and all-pervading presence there is a Saviour still beside you; and in order to share the gifts He bought for the rebellious, it only needs that you welcome *Him* and appropriate *them*. Do as your neighbour did: he awoke to-day in spirits perhaps more depressed than you, but he soon bethought himself, "The Lord liveth, blessed be my rock;" and it was somewhat to this effect he spoke: "I am a worm, and no man; O Saviour, perfect Thy strength in my weakness. My sins are a weighty burden; I cannot carry them. O Lamb of God, I lay them upon thee, and as Thou takest them away, grant me Thy peace. I am a burden to myself; such confusion, such corruption, such earthly-mindedness—so mean spirited, with aims so paltry, and tastes so coarse, and conduct so contemptible, if sure of heaven, I could almost pray to be taken hence;

> 'Then of a sinner thou art rid,
> And I am free from sin.'

But as it is not into the holy place that I am going, but into the tempting, dissipating, hardening world, come with me, O Thou Mighty and Merciful High Priest. Hide me in secret of Thy presence. Let Thy Holy Spirit dwell with me, keeping my heart pure and my conscience tender, supplying fortitude, patience, recollectedness, energy."

It was thus he prayed; and though not a word of reply was audible, there was an answer to that prayer. It is

answered in a certain serenity of spirit and assurance Godward. It is answered in the believer's good hope, so different from the worldling's gay forgetfulness—in a conscience no longer callous, but sprinkled from dead works, freed from the incrusting hardness and the guilty bondage, and trying to please that Father whose loving-kindness it trusts and tenderly adores.

And if you, too, were wise, you would do as he has done. Your neighbour's Saviour you would accept as your own; and, without waiting for the Christ of to-morrow, you would welcome the Christ of to-day. Like Levi making a great feast, giving grateful reception to Him who comes to be the guest of sinners, and who, to as many as receive Him, gives a princely patent, "power to become the sons of God,"—extending the homage and hospitality of your best affections to that illustrious Visitant who into your mean abode condescends to come with all His purifying, ennobling resources;—like Zaccheus, you would find that in the person of a welcomed Saviour salvation was come into your soul.

A discovery which will prolong and expand into another:—He who has found a Saviour has found something more than a moral remedy or a good physician: he has found an all-sufficient, never-failing FRIEND. The immense benevolence of Jesus it needs faith of God's own giving to believe; it will need the experience of eternity to understand. But you are well off who have such a Friend—a Friend whose mysterious love found an attraction in your very misery, and whose kindness finds congenial occupation in doing for you "exceeding abundantly, above

all that you ask or think"—a Friend who, in saying, "Ask, and ye shall receive," has given you unlimited command of His services.

"Weak though we are, He still is near,
To lead, console, defend;
In all our sorrow, sin, and fear,
Our all-sufficient Friend.

From His high throne in bliss He deigns
Our every prayer to heed;
Bears with our folly, soothes our pains,
Supplies our every need.

And from His love's exhaustless spring
Joys like a river come,
To make the desert bloom and sing
O'er which we travel home."

"O Jesus, there is none like Thee!" as they know best who are most in His company. When your heart is near breaking, to Him tell the sorrow; and whilst at His feet the tears are still falling, over your wounded spirit He will be distilling that gentle balm which will at once assuage the pain and strengthen your heart. When in straits and sore perplexity, resort to this wonderful Counsellor, to whom all futures are foreknown—to whom no path is formidable; and who, if in the Valley of Achor no door should open, can save His people by giving them the wings as of an eagle, or snatching them up to His throne.[1] When harassed by unbelief, unhinged by controversy, or puzzled by hard questions—when books fail to satisfy and reasonings are not conclusive, commit the matter to the Lord; and as He sends forth His light and truth, "His Spirit is good," and by that best of casuists led to the land

[1] Rev. xii. 5, 14.

of uprightness, you will find at once intellectual repose and spiritual renovation. When weakened in the way, tired with working, tired with pain, tired with sinning—when resolution flags and old incentives fail, when you can neither creep nor run, "wait upon the Lord:" "wait, I say, upon the Lord;" and although it were sitting silent in His presence, those that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. You shall get courage to resume; and when you try again, you shall run and not be weary, you shall walk and not faint.

"Jesus, my Master!" were words so sweet to St. Bernard, that he never wearied repeating them. And we want a MASTER, a LORD—an intellectual pre-eminence, to which we are compelled to do homage—a moral superiority, which bids us at once admire and despair. And "One is your Master, even Christ," that great Teacher, in whose words of "spirit and life" you have at once found saving truth and a personal transformation—that King of kings in whose life you have learned to live, in serving whom powers and faculties hitherto mute and unmeaning have discovered at once a sufficient use and an immortal bestowment—that Saviour-Sovereign, of whom it may be truly said, that the more entirely you obey Him, the more king-like you are—the more entirely you belong to Him, the more thoroughly are you master of yourself.

However, we want more than a Friend or a Master; we want not only to love and obey, we want to worship. We want some one to whom we shall not have given too much when we have given all our heart and soul, and strength and mind. And so it completes the case when

revelation steps in, and for the express image of the Father claims that reverence which given to a creature were idolatry, but which withheld from Christ is robbery. Obedient to the behest which bids even angels worship Him, to the name of Jesus our adoring spirit bows, and, in common with "every creature which is in heaven," we rejoice to ascribe "blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever." Him whom we have learned to trust as our Saviour, and love as our Friend, and follow as our Master, in wonder and worship, with Thomas, we also hail as our LORD and our GOD.

Temperaments are diverse; and love to the Lord Jesus may also vary according to that aspect of His work or person on which the enlightening Spirit has fixed the beholder's eye. Where there has gone before a deep sense of sin, with a fervour faintly shared by others the rescued spirit sings His praise who took it from the fearful pit, and the prevailing sentiment towards the great Deliverer is *gratitude.* Another may find himself attracted by the grace and truth, the majestic beauty and endearing goodness, of the Son of God, and by an *affinity* Heaven-imparted, to One fairer than the sons of men His spirit may ascend and cling. Whilst, in the awe-struck homage of yet a third,—some bold transgressor violently arrested, or some proud intellect led captive, but still apt to struggle,—amidst all the gratitude and complacency there may sometimes revive such consciousness of sin as almost to shrink from a Presence too sacred, and the love may not be so perfect as to cast out all fear. Then, again, with

the natural constitution may vary the amount of this affection and the modes of its manifestation. Silent and sensitive, to some an oral confession is an appalling martyrdom; whilst others would not feel honest unless they exclaimed, "Lord, I will follow Thee to prison and to death!" Just as, on the other hand, the love which, without speaking one syllable, a penitent utters in convulsive sobs and fast-flowing tears, and which the twice-converted Peter exhibits alike in zealous deeds and warm words of devotion, the son of Zebedee shows in the joy which his Master's presence imparts—in the rapture with which he sees Him come again—and in the expressive silence, the delicate discernment, which without saying aught about his love, or waiting to be bidden, when the Master moves, constrain him to arise and follow where He goes before.

Love to the Lord Jesus is the essence of religion; and, without discussing how much of it is needful to constitute a Christian, let us urge its unspeakable importance. If you have it not,—if the Lord Jesus is no Friend of yours, we cannot promise you much happiness in the present life; for the best happiness is to be found in Him to whom you still are a stranger. And with yourself there must be something radically wrong. To be capable of loving others, yet to have no love to Christ, is a terrible anomaly; for which you account more terribly if you say, He is too kind, too holy, too much like God himself. And your prospects are awful:—"If any man love not the Lord Jesus, let him be accursed when the Lord cometh." So excellent in Himself is the Lord Jesus, and

so suited to our need, that most reasonably and righteously God the Father employs Him as a test or touchstone of the sons of men. By the treatment He receives the thoughts of many hearts are revealed; and, after listening to that voice from heaven,—"This is my beloved Son; hear ye Him,"—if you will not hear Him, or if, looking at Him, you declare there is no beauty in Him, nothing for which you should desire Him—then Christ's home cannot be your heaven; and God has for you no other Saviour; nor is there the least prospect that eternity will ever bring you another Gospel. You have too much reason to desire that the Lord's coming may be remote; for what but consternation, and the curse of perpetual banishment from His presence, can the approach of an unloved Saviour bring you? And how enhanced will be your misery, should it prove that it was some horrid sin which hindered you from loving Him!—should it prove that, amongst the candidates who, with silent appeal or clamorous importunity, came day by day soliciting your preference, you gave a cold or angry look to the kind and holy Jesus, and put the prize into the hand of some lust or evil passion!

"God forbid that I should treat Him thus!" do you exclaim? "But I know not what to do. I am told that I must get love to Christ; and, in order to get love, I must get faith; and, in order to get faith, I must ask the gift of the Holy Spirit. I would be so thankful to be able to say what Peter said; but, before I get that length, the process seems so intricate that I quite despair. And, besides,—forgive me for saying it,—but I feel that

it is not in human nature to be frightened into faith and love."

True; but people are sometimes frightened out of apathy or recklessness. "If you go on at this rate," says a friendly monitor, "you will land in the workhouse," and the spendthrift pulls up. He bends his mind to the business of retrenchment; and, first amused, then interested, with the experiment of living upon little, he at last grows habitually frugal; and, in as far as he was startled out of wastefulness, you may say that he has been frightened into forethought and economy. So some have been frightened into health and a long life. "If you go on at this rate," says the faithful physician, "next autumn will see you in your grave;" and the man believes it, and gives up his dissipation, and takes the prescription, and attains a green old age.

So the Bible would be a cruel book if it were not with a kind intention that it employed such alarming language—"He that believeth not is condemned already, and shall be lost eternally. He that loves not the Lord Jesus shall be accursed at his coming." These are true sayings, and terrible; but, in order that they may cease to be frightful, your wisdom is to quit that class to whom they apply.

For, if he who believes not is lost, he who believes in the Lord Jesus is safe: he shall never perish, nor come into condemnation. If you would throw yourself on His grace and power, there is nothing which He has been to others that He is not willing to be to you. If just as He is you go to Him just as you are, He will receive you; and

if you keep near Him He will not only forgive your iniquities but heal your diseases, and will crown you with loving-kindness and tender mercies.

"How soon?" This instant; for He is now waiting to be gracious. On His side no further preparation is needful. *There* "all things are ready." Incline your ear, and go to Him who, with arms extended world-ward, and wide enough to embrace us all, says, "Come unto Me." To prepare the Saviour for the sinner nothing further is needful: and do you, O sinner, without further preparation, come. Halt, maimed, and ragged, without waiting till your raiment is more reputable or your lameness has gone off, without waiting till your faith is strong, or your repentance has confirmed into saintly character, go to the Lord Jesus just as you are, and He will supply all that you need. He will give you a place at that feast which He has prepared for the unprepared, for those whom the invitation surprises in ditches and on dust-heaps, on highways and in hedges, and whom the robe of His own providing, together with His own exalted fellowship and His Spirit's reviving energy, transforms into the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty.

Alas! We are slow to understand. Even whilst gazing into the Gospel, how our eyes are holden so as not to see its most marvellous announcement! As has been well remarked, "The power of God is not the inmost centre of His being, but His holiness and love are the power above His omnipotence. He reveals Himself not only as a holy Lawgiver and Judge, demanding our services, but as *holy communicative love*, proposing it to Himself as His end in

creation—the production of loving beings, made after His own likeness."[1] To get hold of this truth is to get hold of the principle which underlies the Gospel, and which comes out in every faithful saying. It is to get as much insight as revelation itself imparts into the deep things of Deity, and it is the firmest foot-hold which faith can hope to gain when wishing to feel assured and confiding towards Infinite Excellence. God is love; and when He made man at the first, He made him after His own image —full of affectionate devotion, full of loving-kindness. And although man has destroyed himself—although, from the broken cistern of the human heart, this living water has all run out, Jesus has brought it back again. Himself the manifestation of Heaven's compassion, and the great magazine of God's mercies to mankind, we drink the living water when we believe His own declaration, and surrender to the Father's love. We drink the living water when we taste the sweetness of pardoning mercy, and suffer ourselves to be once more beloved by God. We drink the living water, and, instead of perishing, we possess eternal life; for we believe that great love which God had toward us when He sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. And thus believing, we become new creatures. We get again some of those lineaments which were lost in the Fall. We begin again to love God whom we have not seen, as also the brother whom we see;—thus again evincing a recovered celestial sonship; for "God is love, and every one that loveth is born of God."

[1] Dorner, in that great repertory of sound and seasonable theology, *The British and Foreign Evangelical Review*, vol. xi. p. 630.

Passing through the desert, you pick up a withered gourd. You are amazed at its lightness, and much do you marvel how an object so bulky should prove such absolute levity. Yet you can understand how it happened. Lying there in the burning sand, no wonder that every particle of sap is absorbed, and that its moisture is turned into the drought of summer.

But now that you have come to this fountain, cast it in, and leave it a little. How is it now? Does it feel full and solid? Nay, cast it out on this mighty and horizonless main; and, after it has nodded and tumbled a while on the billows, stretch forth your hand, and take it up once more. Is it not light and empty as ever? And how is this? With an ocean on every side, able to fill it millions of times over and over, why does it continue empty and void? Why, but because it is closed all round and round. There is not an open valve, nor the smallest crevice at which a drop can enter. It continues empty and hollow, because waterproof and hermetically sealed.

Have you never felt your own heart like that rattling gourd—dry, empty, unloving? The deepest thing in all your nature—do you not feel as if that deepest thing were a dismal void? Where love to God should be,—the spirit's strength and blessedness,—does it not feel a great vacuity? —a thirsty chasm?—a dreary, sounding emptiness? And why is this? Is God unloved, because unlovely? Is He unenjoyed, because unapproachable and incommunicable? Is it a dry, parched land—a dusty, burning desert, on which your poor soul is cast out to pine and shrivel?—a world

from which, like the last shower which fell on the Sahara, and which is long since forgotten, God's kindness is long since departed?

Ah, no! the gourd is afloat. All round is the Gospel. On every side stretches the multitudinous expanse of God's mercies. It was He who shed down sweet sleep on your eyelids last night, and roused you this morning to blessings wide as your horizon and high as His own heaven. It is He who, every Sabbath in the sermon, and every day in His own Book, keeps whispering, "Trust me: love me: believe me: return to your spirit's Father: oh, be reconciled to God!" And if your spirit is not long since inundated and surcharged with the inflowings of fatherly affection, and the raptures of filial devotion, it is because unbelief has made it love-proof, and, amidst the full flood of God's mercies, keeps it hermetically sealed.

Such is the soul of the worldling. Such is the heart of the unbeliever. It is a little self-contained desert afloat on an ocean of blessing; and it is only by breaking the heart—by making an opening in the love-excluding unbelief, crushing in its arrogance and self-sufficiency—that the same stroke of God's Spirit which reveals its own emptiness, lets in something of the encompassing Gospel, and fills it with peace and joy in believing.

It is this holy love,—it is this opening of the heart to God's good-will,—which draws back to Himself that heart in grateful devotion and tender affiance. The love of God you cannot overrate, nor from its infinite well-spring drink too largely. "God is love;" and to believe that love, of

which the sinless creation is the boundless sphere, and of which Calvary is the focus concentrated, the bright and burning expression,—to believe that it is not a cold law, a dark fate, a sombre power, in which you live and move and have your being; but to believe that it is God's great life which now encircles and will eternally enclasp your little life; to believe that a Being most wise, most holy, most tenderly merciful, hovers round your daily path, guards your bed of slumber, and listens to your every prayer; to believe that that God whom Jesus loved so ardently, in communion with whom He spent the nights so pleasantly, and into whose hands He commended His spirit so serenely; to believe that this God and Father of the Lord Jesus is for Jesus' sake a fatherly loving God to you;—to get grace to believe this, is to learn the lesson which the Incarnate Word was constantly teaching, and the faith of which gave to John and his brethren their fulness of joy.

If you, too, would be happy, learn to love. View God as He reveals Himself. Believe Him to be what Jesus said; believe Him to be what Jesus was. When any mercy or any happy moment comes, remember the pleasant truth—God Himself is near. And just as in your chamber there is a brightness, and though you cannot see the firmament, you know the unclouded sun is shining: so in your home there is health, there is comfort, there is a glow of affection, and you feel, How sacred is this happiness! It is a smile from God! And just as your little child wakes up and finds a present on his pillow, and shouts forth his wonder and his thanks: so when, through

no labour of your hands, through no procurement or desert of yours, there comes to you some good and perfect gift, you cry, "Thanks be to God, through Jesus Christ! My heavenly Father has been here; for it is thus He giveth to His beloved in their sleep."

V.

"FEED MY SHEEP."

Βόσκε τὰ ἀρνία μου.
Ποίμαινε τὰ πρόβατά μου.
Βόσκε τὰ πρόβατά μου.

JOHN XXI. 15, 16, 17.

EXPOSED to many dangers, in themselves resourceless and feeble, at once dependent and gregarious, the sheep of the pasture supply a most obvious emblem for many of our human communities or associations. But although the king, the prophet, the father, are in the Bible all spoken of as "shepherds," it almost looks as if the occupation had been instituted on very purpose to image forth the work of the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls—of Him who, having laid down His life for the sheep, is in a sense pre-eminent and exclusive "the Good Shepherd"—of Him who gathers the lambs with His arm and carries them in His bosom—and of whom every believer may sing with the Psalmist, "He restoreth my soul; he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me."

On the other hand, it was the grace and wisdom of the Saviour, before going out of sight, that something of His

own pastoral work He assigned to His servants. "He gave some to be apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the building up the body of Christ." To Peter, and to all in any equivalent position, He said, "Lovest thou me? Feed my sheep."

The first thing we notice is the connexion of the two things. "Lovest thou me? Feed MY lambs." "Lovest thou me? Feed my sheep." "After this, there is little that you can do directly for myself. There will be no need to draw the sword, and smite any one in defending me, for my life will never again be in danger. There will be no need to extend to me the hospitalities of your home, as on that day when your mother-in-law rose from the fever to minister to us—no need for you to go into the city to buy bread, whilst your weary Master waits by the well; for henceforth I hunger no more, neither thirst any more. But as you will still love me, and still wish to show it, here is the opportunity—here are the objects of my affection. If thou lovest me, feed my sheep—*my* sheep, for the Father hath given them to me, and none shall pluck them from the Father's hand—*my* sheep, for I have laid down my life, and bought them with my blood. But I hand them over to thee.[1] Simon, son of Jonas, and all

[1] "To Peter it was said, not 'Feed *thy* sheep,' but 'Feed *mine*.' Therefore Peter is a pastor, not independently and of himself, but as identified with the Chief Shepherd (*in corpore pastoris*). If he were to feed his own sheep, those whom he fed would soon become goats."—*Augustini Sermones*, cclxxxv. 5. In the same spirit, and with characteristic terseness, is the note of Grotius:—"Pasce; id est, ipsis, non tibi, consule; suade, non coge: oves non tuas, sed meas." "Feed, that is, take care, not of yourself, but of them; use kindness, not compulsion; they are not your sheep, but mine."

you apostles, for my sake take care of them, and treat them kindly." A charge which will recall to many minds the verses of Mr. M'Cheyne, written beside this very Sea of Tiberias :—

"How pleasant to me thy deep-blue wave,
O Sea of Galilee!
For the glorious One who came to save
Hath often stood by thee.

Fair are the lakes in the land I love,
Where pine and heather grow:
But thou hast loveliness far above
What Nature can bestow.

It is not that the wild gazelle
Comes down to drink thy tide:
But He that was pierced to save from hell
Oft wander'd by thy side.

It is not that the fig-tree grows,
And palms, in thy soft air,
But that Sharon's fair and bleeding Rose
Once spread its fragrance there.

Graceful around thee the mountains meet,
Thou calm, reposing sea;
But ah, far more! the beautiful feet
Of Jesus walk'd o'er thee.

And was it beside this very sea
The new-risen Saviour said
Three times to Simon, 'Lovest thou Me?
My lambs and sheep then feed.'

O Saviour! gone to God's right hand!
Yet the same Saviour still,
Graved on Thy heart is this lovely strand,
And every fragrant hill.

Oh, give me, Lord, by this sacred wave,
Threefold Thy love divine,
That I may feed, till I find my grave,
Thy flock—both Thine and mine!"

It is this love to the Saviour which has been the great secret of each successful ministry. It was this which led the devoted Macdonald to exchange his London congregation for mission work in Calcutta, and which, in answer to his people's entreaty, made him say, "If any chain forged on earth could bind me, that memorial might; but I feel that, contrary to my own weak nature, all ties are made as flax to me. I feel bound in spirit, and I cannot but go. I feel that I have this night come to the brink of waters, deep, dark, and strong; and never has my flesh trembled as now. But there is a voice from the Unseen which says, 'It is I; be not afraid.' That voice I know; it is 'the Beloved' who speaks. I must not shrink. I may not fear; but will follow whithersoever He calls. I am not yours, my beloved brethren and flock, neither am I my own. His I am, and must be; therefore, I *go*."[1] It was this which enabled the great English evangelist to write on the day of his ordination, "When the bishop laid his hand upon me, I gave myself up to be a martyr for Him who hung upon the cross for me. Till you hear of my dying for, or in my work, you will not be apprised of all the preferment that is expected by George Whitefield." It is this which from our shy and shut-up spirits takes off the constraint and the coldness, and which, carrying us over our finical reserve and fastidious scruples, makes us instant in season and out of season. It is this which reconciles the accomplished scholar to live among savages, and which carries up to the sultry attic, or down into the damp and airless cellar, the refined and high-bred daugh-

[1] Dr. Tweedie's *Life of the Rev. J. Macdonald*, p. 301.

ters of a Christian land. It is this which makes the patient and long-suffering teacher put up with the waywardness, the selfishness, the ingratitude, and inattention of his scholars; and it is this which made Peter himself and Paul so gentle and much-enduring amongst converts very quarrelsome and carnal, very crude and un-Christ-like; for even amongst these wild sheep might be lambs of Christ's fold, and it was Himself who was saying, "Lovest thou me? Then tend my sheep; take care of my lambs; feed my flock."

In a letter to his mother, the fervid Payson writes:— "Oh, what a Master do I serve! I have known nothing, felt nothing, all my days, in comparison with what I now see in Him. Never was preaching such sweet work; never did the world seem such a nothing; never did heaven appear so near, so sweet, so overwhelmingly glorious. God's promises appear so strong, so real, more solid than the rocks and everlasting hills; and His perfections, what shall I say of them? When I think of one, I wish to dwell on it for ever; but another and another equally glorious claims a share of admiration; and when I begin to praise, I wish never to cease, but to find it the commencement of that song which will never end. Often have I felt as if I could that moment throw off the body, without staying to 'first go and bid them farewell that are at home in my house.' Let who will be rich, or admired, or prosperous, it is enough for me that there is such a God as Jehovah, such a Saviour as Jesus, and that they are infinitely and unchangeably glorious and happy."[1] No

[1] *Memoir of Edward Payson*, chap. xix. p. 365.

wonder that, when such was the frame of the preacher's mind, a great blessing began to attend the ministry—a blessing which has left Pentecostal associations round the name of Payson and over the scene of his labours in Portland. Were such fervour ours; were we only suffering our minds to dwell on the grace and glory of Immanuel till a faint assent became a full assurance, and till the concession of His claims became an absorbing sense of personal obligation, the warmth of our feelings would lend a glow to our words, and the gospel of a shining countenance would at once interpret and confirm the glad tidings of the chapter read or the sermon spoken.

2. Peter and his colleagues were evangelists. It was part of their vocation to bring into the fold the sheep not yet gathered—the wild and unreclaimed. But they were also pastors. That is to say, it was their business to provide for the flock food convenient—food for the sheep, food for the lambs.

A wise and holy man, the father of many faithful—I mean the Rev. Henry Venn—has recorded this experience, —"The great danger is from surfeiting children with religious doctrines or over much talk. Doctrines they are too young to understand; and too frequent talking wearies them. Many parents err in expecting that the religion of a child should be the same as their own. I did not give mine formal instructions till they were eight years old, and then chiefly set before them the striking facts in the Old Testament, or the miracles in the New. I also laboured much to set before them the *goodness* of our God

in things which they could understand, such as the comforts which we enjoyed together. Watching providential occurrences, I made use of them to give a body and substance to spiritual truth. One method used to affect them much—carrying them to see an afflicted child of God rejoicing in tribulation, and speaking of His love. To this day they tell of one and another whom they saw happy, though poor and in pain."[1]

The goodness of God, and His power to make His people happy, are great lessons; and so are God's holiness and the hatefulness of sin. But even to little children far younger than eight years old there is something wonderfully arresting in the story of Bethlehem, and something singularly engaging in His pattern who grew up at Nazareth in favour with God and with all people. And there must be in ourselves some mismanagement if in the Book which tells about Joseph and his brethren, about David and the giant, about Daniel in the den, we can get nothing arresting or entertaining for the youngest. And we are sure that in his own later day, if a group of little children had gathered round this self-same apostle, he could have enchained them with the story of what had befallen himself:—how he was thrown into prison, and was sentenced to die, and how, the night before, he was sleeping, and all of a sudden something broke through his dream, and he opened his eyes, and, though a lovely countenance bent over him, and all around was a sweet, pure light, it was not heaven; for there slept the soldiers, and here on his own hands were the manacles; but he had hardly time

[1] *Venn's Life* (1835), p. 429.

to look at them when the chains fell to the floor, and through self-opening gates and silent sentinels, he and his bright guardian passed out into the street, and he went on to a house where he found his friends assembled and spending the night in prayer for Peter. And they would have gladly listened as he told them what wonderful things he had seen the Lord Jesus do,—His walk on the stormy water, the feast which He gave to five thousand people on five loaves and two little fishes, His raising the dead girl to life, and the son of the widow. And he would have told them how there never had been in this world any one so gentle and kind,—how one day in Jerusalem some mothers brought their little children, and wished that He would give them His blessing; and though the disciples thought it a pity that His time should be taken up with such small children, He looked at them so kindly, and held out His open arms to them, and took them up and blessed them, saying, "Suffer them to come unto me; for of such is the kingdom." And he would have told them about this very morning, at the Lake of Galilee, and how, when ready to return to heaven, Jesus was still thinking about the little children, and how He had said to Simon himself, "Take care of them. Feed my lambs."

Strong meat belongeth to those that are of full age; but doses of divinity—the hard questions and high matters of the faith, are not the food convenient for the little ones. The sheep can eat grass and hay, but with its little curly fleece, the lamb in April only plays in the green pasture, and does not care to eat the budding clover and sprouting grass, of which it will be glad enough even in the shape

of hay next winter. Nor is the shepherd angry because the truss or bundle which he fetches from the rick has no attraction for the frolicksome young creatures. These bundles of stored-up theology are for the further grown; but in the meanwhile the simple story and the easy lesson better suit the opening mind. And by way of practical piety, teach them to pray reverently, yet most confidingly and lovingly, to the ever-present Saviour. Encourage everything that is unselfish and generous—everything that is kind and obliging. Let them read the *Children's Missionary Record*, and get interested in the salvation of the heathen. And let them have the pleasure sometimes of conferring kindness on the poor, so that they may enter betimes into the spirit of that maxim which runs so deep through the work of redemption, and which is such a characteristic of vital Christianity: "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

The sheep also must be fed. It is the duty of a pastor to keep back nothing that is profitable. Most probably he will have his own likings and preferences; but every truth has its use; all Scripture is profitable. As tastes are so various, and as in the same audience there is great variety of capacity, and feeling, and circumstances, the wise steward, in dispensing the Word of Life, will seek to suit each want and exigency. Happy the minister who can say with the apostle, "I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God. I have kept back nothing that is profitable."

3. The providing of food convenient is, however, not

the whole of the pastoral office, whether that pastorate be parental, ministerial, or prophetic. It is worth noticing, that in the original the same word is not used all the three times. The first and third time it is *βόσκε*, "feed;" the second time it is *ποίμαινε*, "tend," "do the whole work of the shepherd."[1] And of that work one part was to go out and in before the flock. If he was a good shepherd the sheep got fond of him, and came to know his very voice. They liked him and trusted him, and, as they had no fear of his leading them to poisonous pastures or dangerous places, they went out and in and followed him.

And so instruction is only one part of the pastoral office. Quite as important as instruction is example; and he alone is a good shepherd who, not content with telling the road to heaven, "leads the way." He alone is a good shepherd who to instruction and example adds affection and vigilance,—who, seeing the wolf coming—disastrous error or terrible temptation—warns the flock, and does all he can to repel the danger. He alone is a good shepherd who is full of sympathy and tenderness, binding up that which is broken, and strengthening that which is feeble. He alone is a good shepherd who feels as a personal sorrow the inconsistencies and declensions of believers; and who, if one were wandering, would leave the ninety-and-nine in the wilderness and go after that which is lost.

But if it be so, there is no shepherd sufficiently "good" save Jesus Himself. My dear friends, some of you can say, "The Lord is my Shepherd;" and a good Shepherd He has been to you. You have wanted for nothing. He

[1] In Scotland, "herd the sheep."

has led you and fed you all your life long; and has often led you into places so pleasant that they are a joy to remember. As He asked the disciples, "When I sent you out without scrip, lacked ye anything?"—so at this stage of the journey were He asking you, most of you would be constrained to reply, "Nothing, Lord." And He has often restored your soul—often spared your life, or rescued and revived your endangered piety. You have gone away from the Good Shepherd—got out on the face of the precipice, or been entangled in the deep and treacherous quag, and were in positive danger of being drowned in the world's corruption—when, just in time, a kind arm caught hold of you, and, carried on an unseen shoulder, you were again deposited in safety, and led in the paths of righteousness. And now, though you were walking in the valley of the shadow of death, you need fear no evil. There are many "shadows of death." Some scenes are so agonizing and terrible that the man who has once fairly got through them may say very naturally, "Surely the bitterness of death is past." There are calamities, bereavements, desolations, which, for the moment, sunder you from earth much the same as if you were absent from the body; and fierce diseases which come so near to dissolution, that you ask, "Tell me, my soul, can this be death?" But if these are shadows of death, on the other hand, the believer's dissolution is but the shadow of dying. The sting of death is sin; but if you be resting on a sin-atoning, sin-forgiving Saviour, the deadliness will be taken out of death. Nevertheless, you have the valley to traverse. With its dusky chamber, and its black coffin, and its sunless sepulchre, it

looks dark enough; but, when the time comes, you need not fear to go down into it. The footsteps of the flock all point that way, and plain as any are the Good Shepherd's own. Nor is it so dark as it looks. There is light at either end. The light of the Gospel, and of promises exceeding great and precious, penetrates far in, and the glory about to be revealed shines clear and bright beyond. And you need fear no evil, for One is with you whose rod and staff can comfort. As a guilty, weak, and helpless worm, cast yourself on redeeming grace; and on a faithful Saviour cast all the objects dear to you, and all the work you have been unable to finish; and fear no evil. The valley is short, the Lord your Shepherd is near, and yonder is the house of the Lord, where now you are going to dwell for ever

VI.

SIMON PETER.

"Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me."—JOHN XXI. 18, 19.

DEEP down in a hollow lies the Lake of Galilee. Rimmed round with a fine white gravel, and on the eastern side walled in by lofty hills, for the space of five miles broad and twelve miles long, it fills up the mighty fissure which stretches from the base of Lebanon to the mountains of Moab; and, fed by the river which rushes down to it from the northern highlands, it offers an abundant spoil to the fisherman. On the western side is a broad, warm plain, irrigated by copious springs; and, between its high temperature and abundant irrigation, to its fortunate occupants this "land of Gennesareth" must have been an inexhaustible granary. But there were several villages which depended more directly on the lake itself; and just as on the coasts of Norway and Scotland we have various Fiska-fiords and Fisher-rows, so on the shores of Gennesareth, and on opposite sides, there appear to have been two fish-towns, or Bethsaidas.

In the western, or Galilean Bethsaida, were born and

brought up two boys, called respectively Andrew and Simon. Their father was a fisherman, and they followed the same occupation. Which of these two Barjonases, or Johnsons, was the oldest we do not know; but by far the most marked and forcible character was Simon. With a warm heart, a stirring spirit, and a sturdy constitution, "when he was young he girded himself, and went whithersoever he would." We can easily imagine him climbing the tall palm-tree for its dates, or heading exploring expeditions up the Jordan, when the molten snow came foaming and cascading down those shelves which pass it swiftly to the lake below. Rash and venturesome, he was doubtless an occasional anxiety to his mother, even although she was the wife of a boatman; but, prompt in action, frank and generous, he was a favourite with his companions, and was born to be a leader. Whether on the playground or among grave and grown-up comrades, he was the man to say, "I go a-fishing;" and Nathanael and Didymus, and whosoever else were present, would fall in, "We also go with thee."

A hard and rugged life; to lie in the stern-sheets, soaked with rain, or numbed with the night wind; and full of uncertainties—one night such a take that the nets are dragged to the bottom, or broken; another night, nothing at all: sudden squalls, canvas blown to tatters, boat capsized, the fish restored to the stormy deep, the strong swimmer scarcely saved. Yet not without its softening, solemnizing influences: halcyon seasons—

> "When marshalled on the nightly plain,
> The glittering host bestud the sky,"

and when it is as natural to look up unto the heavens from the liquid expanse as from the grassy slopes of Bethlehem; moonlit nights, when balm comes off the shore, and when the nightingale is singing in the orchards of Tiberias; dim, mysterious nights, when hyænas are laughing and demoniacs howling amongst the tombs of Gergesa, and, like ghosts in procession, white vapours flit over the cliff, or go streaming out and in the hillside sepulchres.

Simon had grown up and was married, and was living with his mother-in-law at Capernaum, when we first make his acquaintance; and we make it in interesting circumstances. He was not, like so many of his countrymen, a self-complacent formalist. He felt himself a sinner; and when John came preaching "the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins," Simon and his brother went all the way to Bethabara to hear him. Andrew was the first to find that "Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world;" and when by Andrew Simon was introduced to Jesus, He said, "Thou art Simon, the son of Jonas, thou shalt be called Cephas (a rock)"—a name not so descriptive of what he was, as prophetic of what he was yet to become. Going back to Galilee, and by turns plying his craft or attending on Christ, he was not finally detached from the fishing-boat till that day—so like the morning here mentioned—when a miraculous draught filled to the point of sinking two boats, and in the presence of superhuman power Simon's self-consciousness was startled into exclaiming, "Depart from me; for I am *a sinful man*, O Lord." But Jesus reassured him: "Fear not: from henceforth thou

shalt catch men;" and, leaving all, he arose, and thenceforward followed his miraculous Master.

With his manner of life in Christ's company you are well acquainted; for of all the apostles he is the most conspicuous. Ardent and honest, full of eager affection, but in delicate discernment and prudent forecast somewhat deficient; frank of speech and swift in action, yet apt to be startled by his own boldness—after a boastful promise or a brilliant beginning, apt to break down—his was the character which is sure to be often vexed with itself, and of which every one sees at a glance the faults or the foibles.

Still, who does not admire his genuineness, his warmth and energy? A chain-cable may have such a flaw, that, run quickly out, its own weight will snap it; whilst a single link of the self-same cable may be drawn into a wire that will multiply tenfold the strength of a packthread ever so long. And so a small portion of Simon's devotedness, in union with a colder and more cautious temperament, might have spun out into a respectable and consistent career of the average duration. But for holding great ships in stormy weather chain-cables are wanted,—bell-wire and packthread won't do; and after the link was repaired—when the fracture in Simon's faith was restored—he became a power in that primitive Church, a reliance and a holdfast to his brethren.

It was a great love and an overmastering which he had for his Lord, and it does us good to see it. The manifestation might be occasionally precipitate or misjudging, but in a cold, calculating world it does us good to see a generous enthusiasm. At the first announcement, "It is

the Lord," we like to see him leaping over the vessel's side, and plunging, swimming, panting towards the shore; and the moment the Lord says, "Bring of the fish which ye have now caught," we like to see him rushing forward, and hauling high and dry the net which more deliberate comrades had safely dragged to the shallows. When Jesus poured water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, we appreciate the feeling which, distressed and almost shocked at such excessive condescension, exclaimed, "THOU shalt never wash my feet!" but when Jesus replied, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me," instantly rejoined, "Then not my feet only, but also my hands and my head." And when, startled at the Divine claims of Jesus, many followers drew off and walked no more with Him, in answer to the appeal, "Will ye also go away?" we are comforted by Peter's memorable avowal, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life; and we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God."

This devotion to his Lord was the grand feature, the saving element in Peter's character,—which even when cast down was not destroyed,—which even when so disastrously eclipsed was not extinguished. And happy they who have a similar love to the Saviour. Like the modern ship in mid-ocean, which, when the propeller fouls, or the axle breaks, has still sails to carry her forward,—which, when a timber is stove, has water-tight compartments sufficient to sustain her still buoyant,—happy they who, even if courage should collapse, or faith itself encounter some shattering collision, have got enough of the new

nature's love to Christ to keep them still afloat—those sails of affection which make the disabled vessel still answer to the helm. Happy the Cranmer who, on the strength of this affection, survives to burn "that unworthy hand;" happy the Peter who at the first look of his Master dissolves in repentance, and lives to declare, with a decision and ingenuousness which nothing can gainsay, "Lord, thou knowest all things: thou knowest that I love thee."

The warning of what awaited him, which the Lord now gave to Peter, was divinely adapted to his peculiar cast of mind, and, in conjunction with the words, "Follow me," was fitted at once to console and solemnize the apostle.

"When thou wast young thou girdedst thyself." Rapidity and self-reliance have always been your way. An hour ago you girded your fisher's coat around you, and it is still wet with your weltering through the water. What you then did you have always been doing, acting on impulse, and girding yourself, and going wherever you pleased. "But"—and there must have been something in the way in which this was spoken which conveyed a peculiar import, for it was at once understood as predicting to Peter a death like Christ's own—"But when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thine hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. Follow me." And whilst we can quite believe that, to the eager disciple, so full of revenge at himself and of devotion to his Lord, there was at this fervid moment joy in the prospect of being conformed to Christ in His crucifixion, in conjunction with all that had

occurred, it was a sobering consideration that the days of freedom and self-disposal were about to be succeeded by days of captivity and a death of violence.

But by that death "he should glorify God."

It is a singular history, older than the time of Peter, as old, we may say, as the death of Abel, and accounted for by man's mournful antipathy to God's holiness and God's truth: in this world of ours, when any one stands out from his fellows severely loyal to his God, that constant tendency to exclaim, "Away with such a fellow from the earth!" that perpetual effort to extirpate unwelcome truth by slaying and burying out of sight the witness-bearer.

Yet in all these martyrdoms God is glorified. Of the death that Peter died we possess no authentic record; but long before his own time came, an earnest was given in the stoning of Stephen, whose angel face and dying prayer made the first impression on a young man called Saul, and from around whose grave the mourners dispersed to go everywhere, preaching the Word. And God was glorified in the funeral pile of Polycarp, who, when the proconsul said, "Curse Christ, and I release thee," made answer, "Six-and-eighty years have I served Him, and He has done me nothing but good, how then can I curse my Lord and Saviour?" and who, before the fire was lighted, prayed, as we could imagine Peter praying,—"Almighty God, Father of Thy beloved Son Jesus Christ, through whom we have received the knowledge of Thyself, I praise Thee that Thou hast judged me worthy of this day and of this hour; to take part in the number of Thy

witnesses, in the cup of Thy Christ." God was glorified in such confessors as the martyr Babylas of Antioch, who marched to the place of execution, singing, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee." He was glorified by Savonarola, saying, as he mounted the scaffold, "My Lord, innocent of all crime, died for my sins, and shall not I willingly give up my life for the love of Him?" It was glory to God when, under the walls of Balliol College, a royal pardon was offered to Ridley if he would even then recant, and he replied, "So long as my breath is in my body I will never deny my Lord Christ and His known truth: God's will be done in me." And, whilst they glorified God by testifying to His truth—laying down their lives in allegiance to a risen and reigning Redeemer—God glorified Himself in the support vouchsafed to His servants; so that, like the martyrs of Lyons, in their superiority to every torment, they seemed already absent from the body; and He glorified Himself in defeating the designs of the devil, so that it has grown to a proverb, "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church."

In our country it is long since any died for Christ's sake and the gospel. Fox's *Martyrology* is a black-letter book, and it is nearly a hundred years since the *Scots Worthies* was written. As we look at the engravings of the former, so quaint and so wooden, we hardly realize that they were men of like passions with ourselves, who went through such ordeals, and crowned lives of suffering with deaths of agony. We find it hard to believe that there was once a St. Botolph's Church in

Aldgate, from under whose shadow, one dark morning in February, a woman with her two little daughters rushed out, and interrupted the armed procession which was conveying forth from London a saintly old man; and, as he and his wife and two children knelt down in the street, and he prayed such a prayer that the very officers wept, and then said, "Farewell, my dear wife; be of good comfort, for I am quiet in my conscience," and then blessed the little daughter in his arms, and said to the other, "God bless thee; I pray you all stand steadfast unto Christ and His Word, and keep you from idolatry;" and his wife answered, "God be with thee, dear Rowland; I will, with God's grace, meet thee at Hadleigh,"—we find it difficult to believe that to Hadleigh he was going to be burned alive; but, when we have somewhat entered into the feelings of the martyr and his noble wife, we can better understand what is included in Christ's "Follow me." And so, when we picture to ourselves the "Heart of Midlothian," and an old Christian in his cell, bending over his Bible, and they open the door, and bring in a basket, and produce a fair-haired youthful head, newly severed; "Do you know this, Mr. Cameron?" "I know it, I know it. My son's—my own dear son's. It is the Lord; good is the will of the Lord, who cannot wrong me nor mine, but has made goodness and mercy follow us all our days"—we wonder how weak humanity survived such tragedies; and, as we think of all whom the headsman's axe left widows, and all whom inquisitorial terrors hunted from their home, and try to estimate that long agony by which a martyr Church has maintained its testimony, we

begin to appreciate the awful privilege assigned to Peter, and to the myriads who, like him, have trod in the Master's bleeding track since that morning when, stretching forth His own pierced hands, Jesus said to the apostle, "Follow me."

The fires of Smithfield are extinct, the Grassmarket gallows is taken down; and most of us expatiate at our ease in that wealthy place to which, through fire and through water, our fathers fought their way. But piety is not yet quite popular, nor do all men take the Lord Jesus for their King. There are still those who, in the effort to live godly, must suffer persecution. There are Sabbath honourers who lose their employment or their trade, and keepers of a conscience who forfeit patronage and profit. And not unfrequently, I fear, is the praying youth interrupted in his devotion by scoffing room-mates, just as the Bible-reading servant or church-going artisan is made a butt and a byword by rude and jeering comrades. Nor is it easily borne. It tries the feelings, and it tries the principle; it tries the temper too, and it sometimes hurts both health and spirits. But, after all, you have the best of it. You are upon the winning side. The tables will soon be turned; the laugh will not always go against the saints. Even now, O scoffer, He that sitteth in the heavens laughs at you. The Lord holds you in derision; and when at last He speaks to you in wrath, you will feel the sharp recoil of arrows shot against the heavens. It is sorry wit which makes wise men look sadly at the speaker, and a poor jest is that which with shame and everlasting contempt covers its author.

"When thou wast young thou girdedst thyself;" and surely this was no discredit to Simon. We all like to see young people active, self-helpful, and handy; and we always feel rather ashamed when we find grown persons retaining so much of infancy, or anticipating second childhood so early that they can do nothing for themselves, but need help in putting on their attire. On the other hand, when God so determines, there is a graceful submission. When old age creeps on, or infirmities still more disabling, let us cheerfully surrender, and be thankful to those who are good enough to do anything for us, or carry us any whither. Old Betty was converted late in life, and though very poor, was very active. She visited the sick; out of her own poverty she gave to those who were still poorer, collected a little money from others when she could give none of her own, and told many a one of the love of the Saviour. At last she caught cold and rheumatism, and lay in bed month after month pain-worn and helpless. A good minister went to see her, and asked, if after her active habits, she did not find the change very hard to bear. "No, sir, not at all. When I was well I used to hear the Lord say day by day, 'Betty, go here; Betty, go there; Betty, do this; Betty, do that;' and I used to do it as well as I could; and now I hear Him say every day, 'Betty, lie still and cough.'"[1] By a sweet submission glorify God. By patience and thankfulness render it delightful to those around to minister to your necessities, and seek to give them in return the edifying spectacle of pain well endured in strength of God's own giving. And thus, whilst He

[1] *American Presbyter.*

makes your bed in your sickness—thus, whilst old and grey-headed, He keeps His everlasting arms around you, you will show His strength to the new generation; His power and faithfulness to those who are coming after—a good confession, a gentle and not inglorious martyrdom.

VII.

THE DISCIPLE WHOM JESUS LOVED.

"Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following."
JOHN XXI. 20.

BUT which was the disciple whom Jesus did not love? Philip, the first to follow and the last to understand; Thomas, slow to believe, but, once convinced, so prompt with his confession; the guileless Bartholomew; the homely, practical, unsentimental James; the eager, warm-hearted Peter;—Jesus loved them all. They had each a place in his intercessions when He prayed for those whom the Father had given Him. They had each a place in His atonement when He made His soul an offering for sin; and each of them has now a home in His heaven.

There was one, however, whom the Lord distinguished from the rest so far as to evince a special confidence or congeniality, and to whom there was conceded by his brethren an epithet which consenting Christendom has delighted to confirm; and we may spend a few moments profitably in considering those traits or features which earned for him that highest of distinctions, "the disciple whom Jesus loved."

As we apprehend his character, the first thing which strikes us is a peculiar intuition. "Blessed are the pure

in heart, for they shall see God," and God shall be seen in them. That great sight, God dwelling in the midst of men, was early disclosed to this pure-hearted beholder, and through the rest of life he seems never to have lost the open vision. "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; and we beheld his glory, the glory of the only-begotten of the Father." "The Life was manifested"—the Living One and the Lifegiver—"and that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you." The glorious God, through the face of Jesus, shined into his soul, and through his own bright features and blameless walk that glory shone forth again—passionless, pure-hearted, reflecting the glory which he gazed upon.

When you float on a tranquil bay, and through its sleeping waters look down to the glistening sand and the sea-plants that scarcely move in the waveless tide, instantly you know it is long since any storm was here; for had there been a recent tempest, by this time the surface might be smooth, but the brine would be muddy, and the tender sea-plants would be tangled and torn: so when you look into John's pellucid pages, such a meekness and benignity shine through them, and, like the gentle shapes of crimson and green in a stormless sea, the thoughts and feelings of the writer gleam forth from such a transparent medium, that you irresistibly exclaim, "Blessed man! it is long since the last gust of passion ruffled that tranquil bosom. Truly it was a great calm which was there created when to that heart of thine, with its guilty fears and human anxieties, the Incarnate Word said, 'Peace, be still,' and for ever lulled its agitations in nearness to His

own. Blessed are the pure in spirit, for into all the depths of their nature the Godhead can shine." And blessed are they, for from their spirit's tranquil surface the Godhead is reflected. When you draw near, and bend over that limpid pool, like a fairy forest you see the rhodomenias and corallines underneath, with arrowy forms darting through them; but when you retire, and from some distance look back, all these details are hidden from the view, but in the cloudless sky you see one sun, in the molten silver mirror spread below you perceive another. So when from close contact with John's Gospel and Epistles, and from near inspection of the charming thoughts and wonderful truths there disclosed, you draw off a little space, and try to look at the writer, you are conscious of something clearer than mere candour—something brighter than mere earthly beauty. And so it is. Christ is revealed in the narrative; He is reflected from the mind of the writer. —"With that loving gaze fixed upwards upon the Light of Life, his own eye has become light; the sun has made it sunlike."[1]

Ingenuousness and intuition are near allied: the pure heart, the open eye. From the time that the Baptist exclaimed,—"Behold the Lamb of God," it would seem as if John had no longer toiled at that task which some of us find so troublesome—the task of taking away our own sins; but had rested in sweet security, satisfied with a Divine Redeemer and Reconciler, and at leisure to observe those gracious words and wonderful works which showed so plainly the Father.

[1] *Christ the Light of the World*, by Rudolph Besser.

One of the greatest gifts we can ask from God is this open eye, and the open heart its correlate. We say to John, "Beloved disciple, do tell us the secret of your happiness;" and he hands us an epistle in which it is all written down. "These things we write, that your joy may be full. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin. If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life." Or he hands us a Gospel with the conversations and prayers of His Master carefully recorded, and subjoins, "These things are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that, believing, ye might have life through his name." In other words, light shines from the Lord Jesus sufficient to show that He is the Son of God, the Saviour. If you will only look, that light will so shine into your heart as to chase away your gloom and cheer you into hope, and love, and like-mindedness. The light of God, as it shines in Jesus, will be life to your soul. In other words, heaven's grand gratuity—God's greatest gift—the best in itself, and in its bestowment the most free and ungrudging,—is salvation or a Saviour. Of presents the purest, of benefactions the freest and most God-like, is life eternal. This life is conveyed in the person of the Saviour; if you have the Son of God, you already have life; if you now accept Him, He is yours, and yours also are the life and the Divine sonship which He confers on as many as receive Him.[1] "The things

[1] John xx. 31; i. 4, 12; 1 John i. 4, 7; ii. 1; v. 11, 12.

which we have seen and heard we write unto you, that you may have fellowship with us; that you may see them as we saw them, and hear them as we heard them; and so have the same communion with the Father, and the same fulness of joy."

We ourselves love to be understood, and we like to have our good offices accepted, our kind intentions appreciated. This was one reason why his Master so delighted in John. He knew that He was understood, and, even where insight might for the moment be baffled, He could count on his adoring acquiescence. The manifestation might be miraculous, and the disciple might be deeply conscious of his own depravity, but John would not cry, "Depart from me, O Lord, for I am a sinful man:" and the act might be painfully condescending; but still, if his Master was pleased to stoop to a menial office, John would not in rash humility exclaim, "No, never! Lord, thou shalt never wash my feet." Nor would it be needful on the last day of intercourse to say to him, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet have you not known me?"

That limpid eye, that loving heart, are a joy to the Lord Jesus wherever He sees them. May He see them in you! As a good and perfect gift, may the Holy Spirit confer on you the art of seeing, and the art of receiving!

> "Earth 's crammed with heaven,
> And every common bush a-fire with God;
> But only he who sees takes off his shoes,"[1]

—So this morning there stood a figure on the shore; but although sea-eyes are sharp, the eye of love is still sharper;

[1] Aurora Leigh.

and where the others were only conscious of some ordinary Galilean, the disciple whom Jesus loved came out with the truth, "It is the Lord." And so, in that Gospel and in those Epistles where others see only texts and Scripture proofs—answers to Gnosticism, and confutations of Popery—do you learn to see the Incarnate Mystery, the mind and manner of that Saviour with whom your present relations should be so immediate and intimate, and without whose society and sympathy eternity itself is but outer darkness. And whilst with John you learn in Jesus to see what God shows you, learn to accept what in Jesus God gives you,—the cleansing from all sin, the life eternal, fellowship with the Father; for in Christ dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and the thing which made John so blessed was, that out of this fulness he had learned to receive, even grace for grace. It is not for Himself, nor for those who are righteous already, that Christ is the Fountain opened, the Lamb of God, the Bread of Life, the Light of the World; but, with a mean and mistaken humility, we won't accept the *gift* of God till we have prepaid it with a penny in the pound. The Sun of Righteousness is shining, but we keep the shutters closed, and rub our eyes, declaring that there was never known such dismal weather. All around our tent lies the manna shower, but, instead of gathering a fresh supply, we take down some ancient pipkin, and, setting it on to simmer for the fiftieth time, lament the scanty grains and musty flavour. We sing, "I lay my sins on Jesus," and insist on carrying them ourselves. Christ comes and offers to cleanse us from all unrighteousness—from this day's trespasses, as well as

from the sin of all our history—but we do not understand how His word abiding in us makes us clean every whit, and imagine that it is by washing ourselves, rather than by suffering Him to wash us, that we are to obtain a "part" in Him.[1] Oh, how happy we might be if, like John the Divine, as regards the greatest of sights, we could be content for a time to be simply *seers;* and, as regards the greatest of gifts, we could bring ourselves to be neither petitioners nor purchasers, but simply *receivers!* How rich we should be if thus we took all that God actually gives! and what a loveliness might at last be our own if the soul would learn to turn round where God points, and so live and die looking unto Jesus!

Open, receptive, unpreoccupied, John's was that attitude of mind which, at the disclosure of Incarnate Deity rejoicing with exceeding joy, was prepared to sustain without stumbling the unveiling of an awful as well as glorious future. To the aërial voyager, who soars above it, the lightning is not terrible; and to one who has seen the great white throne, with the justice and judgment which form its habitation, there is nothing ominous or sinister in the clouds which go before it, and which, after all, are but dark vapours exhaled from our earth. And so in that "revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave unto him," there are things hard to be understood, and bitter when realized;[2] but a devout and lowly spirit will not stagger at threatenings any more than at promises, and amidst the clashings and conflicts, the woes and the wailings of a

[1] John xiii. 8. [2] Rev. x. 9.

turbulent future, will rejoice because the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.

"He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God." Such is an aphorism of the celestial philosophy taught by John the Divine. On that night so much to be remembered, and at that last supper, it was John's distinction to occupy the place next to the Master, and in reverential pensive tenderness he drooped his head on that bosom which was soon to be pierced by the Roman spear. Nor did the Friend who sticketh closer than a brother resent the act so expressive of grateful, confiding affection, but left it on the record to show that, like Joseph and his Benjamin, the Lord Jesus is glad when disciples draw nigh; and the disciple thus favoured records it to show that, with the condescension and kindness which He beareth to His own, the Saviour loved them to the end. There were sad thoughts in that bosom, and sorrow verging on death; but there was room also for the lowly ones around Him—room for their love, room for their sorrow.

The Saviour disappeared, but the attachment remained. The Saviour disappeared, and the apostle ceased to have any certain dwelling-place, save the unchanging affection of his Lord. Bethsaida was no longer his home, nor Jerusalem, nor Ephesus; his true home now was the constant, ever-enclosing presence of the unseen Saviour. Most delightful of dwellings,—he carried it with him to the surf-sprinkled isle, as well as over the balmy hills of his native Galilee. There he found sweet asylum amid the idol fanes of Pergamos, and there he found a loftier fellowship than was offered in all the lordly palaces of Ephesus

and Smyrna. In that "moving tent," through all the pollutions of Sardis he passed with raiment undefiled, and in the blessed fellowship there enjoyed he hardly needed Philadelphian steadfastness to bear his spirit up—he hardly felt the blighting wind which had desolated Laodicea's fragrant bowers. For he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God dwelleth in him.

That spirit of contemplation, at once lofty and loving, is somewhat alien from our Western mind. With our cold temperament and scholastic turn, we are fond of definitions, we like to argue; we are not given to long affectionate pondering of some one engaging theme. To muse and meditate is not so much our way as clever work and quick conclusions. Akin to this, we are not rich in feeling. We are judicious; we are sensible. We pride ourselves on being practical; but there is "no nonsense" in us—no idealism, no self-devotement, no fervour. We parade our logic; but to love we are ashamed. Nevertheless, in every age there tower up amongst us exceptional and noble natures, like Tabor from the plain of Jezreel, leaving the flat corn-fields far below, and with transfigurations on their summit—natures like that mountain apart, which, dwelling alone, are much in heaven; on whose elevations the last sunset lingers, and from whose sequestered slopes it seems as if the bow of promise loved to spring; men like those Teutonic mystics of the Middle Age whom à-Kempis represents in his *Imitation of Christ;* men like Howe and Leighton amongst ourselves —Howe, with a spiritual optimism, sustained on the equal wings of far-ranging intellect and enraptured devotion,—

Leighton perpetually declaring, "There is a noble guest within us; let all our business be to entertain Him honourably, and to live in celestial love within:" and devotees in France, like Fénélon and Madame Guyon, the latter of whom has expressed so well the master-thought of this peculiar piety:—

> "All scenes alike engaging prove
> To souls impressed with sacred love;
> Where'er they dwell, they dwell in Thee—
> In heaven, in earth, or on the sea.
>
> To me remains nor place nor time,
> My country is in every clime;
> I can be calm and free from care
> On any shore, since God is there.
>
> Could I be cast where Thou art not,
> That were indeed a dreadful lot;
> But regions none remote I call,
> Secure of finding God in all."[1]

Of the two types of piety—the active and contemplative—Peter and John may be taken as patterns; and, as both conformations exist in society, it is a cause of rejoicing that there is room for both in the Church of Christ. The side of John is that on which few of us are likely to exceed. We are more ready to work than to worship—more anxious to hear some new thing than to realize the all-important things with which we are already familiar. In the dust of our own bustle we veil the heaven, and we run so fast we cannot read. It is God's goodness, therefore, that He gives us leisure. He gives us days when it is impiety not to pause and ponder—birth-days, New-Years' days, sacramental seasons, Sabbaths.

[1] See Note F.

And, if need be, He will find for us a Patmos—service in a family where there is no religion, a sick-room, a dwelling isolated and darkened by some mournful dispensation, where we shall be very thankful if we hear a voice behind us, "I am Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last"—where it will be a profitable seclusion, a blessed banishment, if we are led to a more intimate communion with that Saviour who, oft forgotten, is never far away.

VIII.

JOHN THE DIVINE.

"This is the disciple who wrote these things."—JOHN XXI. 24.

BY the Cross of Jesus there were standing "his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home." And so the beloved disciple became the Saviour's trustee. In ministering to her through whose soul a sword had now pierced, but who, as long as she survived, must have been unspeakably endeared to discipleship as Mary the Lord's mother, he found at once a labour of love and a touching memento of his Master's confidence.

But this sacred charge was not the only purpose for which John tarried. He had his share in preaching the first Gospel and organizing the primitive Church; and it is interesting to find that one of his earliest missions was to the Samaritans, and that he went to impart to them the same gifts which were already enjoyed by believers at Jerusalem;[1] showing how his views had expanded and

[1] Acts viii. 14-17.

his temper had softened since the day when, rather than invoke on such separatists the descent of the Spirit, he would have called for fire from heaven, and showing, too, how Samaria was changed, now that many of its villagers had received into their houses that Saviour whom a little while ago they had driven from their doors.[1] For many years he tarried at Jerusalem;[2] and it would seem as if it had been late in life before he commenced those labours which have identified his name with Ephesus and the Asiatic churches. Christ's ascension he must have survived for nearly seventy years. Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, who received the crown of martyrdom A.D. 167, was John's disciple. Two other links of equal length would have joined the birth of Christ to the reign of Constantine.

This suggests another end which was doubtless accomplished by his long continuance. There is a living impress or likeness of themselves which the master spirits stamp, partly on the surrounding society, and still more strikingly on individual adherents or devotees, and which, to a certain extent, secures the repetition of their virtues. But if this be true in the case of mere human excellence—if in Elisha there survive traits of Elijah—if in Joshua you detect features of Moses reappearing—how much more likely was this transmission to obtain in the case of Christ and His disciples! Where the die was not only faultless but Divine, and where the receiving surface was such an amalgam of personal attachment and reverential adoration, and where the arm of the Lord was the power—where,

[1] Luke ix. 51-56. [2] Acts xv. 6.

soul to soul, His Spirit gave the pressure—can we doubt that on every one would survive an image and superscription at once carrying back the beholder to Jesus of Nazareth? But amongst these disciples who is there that does not feel as if, in its more delicate details, as well as in its pervasive spirit, Christ's character had been especially revealed to that disciple whom He loved—whose open eye could take in the entire manifestation—whose sanctified affinity could so completely take it on? As in water face answereth to face, so we feel that to the thoughts of Jesus answers the silent walk of John, and that those who had never seen the Divine Original saw in him the most life-like copy. Far more precious than any picture or any relic—far more helpful to that early Church than Veronica's miraculous portrait, or the King of Edessa's fabled holograph, was the living epistle in which Christ had registered so many of His deepest thoughts and fondest desires—the living likeness which had looked at the express image of the Father so long as to carry away His very mind and manner. Hence we presume it comes to pass that in all our notions of the highest sanctity, we find commingled more or less some image of St. John. Paul is the hero, and Apollos is the orator, and Stephen is the martyr; but with all earthliness sublimed away and superseded by elements from another world, our associations with John are those of purest saintliness. The planet which beams down on us from the noon of night, does not necessarily suggest the centre of our system: in that remoteness from the source of light you might almost fancy it a separate star which had kindled its own lamp

of silver or of ruby; but the worlds which circle closest to the centre you seldom see, except in a sky still luminous with the orb of day, and in which they float, not so much a contrast to the darkness, as a concentration of the lingering radiance. Like Mercury or the evening star, John is a planet near the sun. In a horizon from which the Light of the World has not long disappeared, he emits a ray so soft and heavenly that you cannot mistake its source, and you are glad to think that the Sun of Righteousness, gone down from our hemisphere, is still looked upon by him.

And John tarried to add some of its most precious portions to the Bible—to the Evangelists the closing Gospel —to the Canon the closing Book.

The Word of God is a magnificent domain, vast in its extent, and with features boundlessly diversified. Like an outer park or forest, the Old Testament histories offer endless scope to the explorer; whilst there is invigoration in the exercise, there is a rich reward in the curious and instructive discoveries awaiting diligent research, and, as showing the Hand most high which guides our human destinies, they furnish the true introduction to universal history. Starting up here and there like rugged cliffs, the genealogies claim more than a sterile grandeur; for bleak and barren though they seem, there is a wellspring at their foot. It is from these dreary crags that the fountain of Christ's manhood takes its rise; and as you follow the stream from Ur of the Chaldees to the manger of Bethlehem, you find how faithful was the Promiser and how watchful the Providence which through all the eventful centuries

kept afloat and guided on the ark of the Advent. Fulfilled and unfulfilled, the prophecies are mountains and valleys, —mountains from whose gilded summits you may look on vistas through the fog,—straths of sunshine in the vapour-flood, where glorious things and gladsome stand revealed, whilst, from the echoing sides of ravines still dark and misty, comes up the heavy footfall or terrific cry of sorrows not seen as yet. The Psalms, the Canticles, the poetic books, are the singing groves, the tinkling rills, the pastures green. Rich in doctrine, laden with the finest of the wheat, the Epistles are the fruitful fields which fill the Church's granary. The Gospels are the garden enclosed, with its blossomed mounts and blazing parterres, and every several path leading up to that Tree of Life in the midst of the garden, conspicuous from every corner. But, as when a house is built on a garden's edge, the inmates are best acquainted with the rose-bush at the door, and the flower-plat next the window; as, when spring invites them forth, it is there that the children play; as it is at these they look when drizzling days have kept them prisoners; and as it is amongst these sweet plants of the threshold that the chair is planted for the wasted invalid when carried out for a last look of earthly summer; so it would seem as if the new nature's home stood somewhere on the verge of John's Gospel. For though believers may be found expatiating through the whole field of Scripture —some resting under Abraham's oak, and some in Jeremiah's bower of weeping cypress, pensively musing; some with Moses on the mount, and some with Elijah in the desert; some rubbing the ears of corn in the doctrinal

Epistles, and some stringing the pearls thickly strewn on the strand of the Proverbs;—yet, when the sky lowers, or evening shadows fall, as if homewards, the general movement is Gospel-wards, and of all Gospels, towards the record of St. John. Near home it must be. The children of the house are familiar with it. Here babes in knowledge may wander at their will; here the dim eye is conscious of the landmarks, and does not lose its way. As on the lawn before the family residence, the last-born youngest child of grace may safely disport him here; and here, leaning on his staff for very age, the old disciple feels that he is breathing native air. Yes, it is near home; so full of Jesus, that you can get no more unless you were actually going in—in where John himself now is—into the "prepared place" where Christ's own presence makes it home.

And his Epistles,—the first, especially,—the essence of his Gospel—the golden fruit from that fragrant, silvery flower. "The Word—God heard: the Light—God seen: the Life—God felt: in one word, Jesus Christ God manifest,"[1] such is the purport of his Gospel, and such is an epitome of his Epistle. The lesson throughout is, "That the means of union with God are, on the part of Christ, His atoning blood (i. 7; ii. 2; iii. 5; iv. 10-14; v. 6) and advocacy (ii. 1); on the part of man, holiness (i. 6), obedience (ii. 3), purity (iii. 3), faith (iii. 23; iv. 3; v. 5), and, above all, love (ii. 7; iii. 14; iv. 7; v. 1")[2]—a God of infinite compassion coming forth to meet His guilty, prodigal children, and they falling into the arms of His

[1] Charles Wolfe. [2] Meyrick, in *Smith's Dictionary of the Bible.*

mercy to receive the words of forgiveness, and be enfolded for ever in the embrace of His fatherliness. God is love, and you need not fear to love Him. Such is the message, and in the announcement there is a theme for life-long meditation. A happy valley, a holy land, is the Gospel revelation. We want to soar, we even like to dive; and, in the world of thought, there are abysses and there are mountain heights. For the divers there is the origin of evil; for the climbers and aëronauts there are the *à priori* argument, the plurality of worlds, the mode of future existence. The divers have gone very deep. With a dredge of 1260 fathoms they have brought up something—not exactly "the dragon of the sea," the mighty mystery for which Leibnitz and other bold fishers angled, but only as yet some poor little worms and star-fishes.[1] And the aërial voyagers have risen very high; but, except that they grew comatose, and felt it fearfully cold, they have not much to report; though far above the earth, they were still inside its atmosphere; and, do what they could, none of these transcendentalists and ethereal aspirants have been able to bring back any absolute result, or get for an instant above "the conditioned." Within sight of those snowy peaks and tempting *aiguilles*,—within sight of that melancholy main and its unfathomed mystery,—

[1] The deepest sounding at which life has been found is Dr. Wallich's. From a depth of 1260 fathoms he brought up living star-fishes, and with the tubes of annelids apparently recent in their digestive cavity. Mr. Glaisher's great ascent was to an elevation of nearly seven perpendicular miles. It seems hardly needful to say how much we admire the heroic feats of the latter, and appreciate the remarkable results obtained by the former. It is in the realm of metaphysical theology, or "wisdom above that which is written," that both the dredge and the balloon have as yet made small addition to our knowledge.

God has planted His garden—has fenced in His own revelation. And although some of us can hardly help dealing in matters too high for us, or too deep, how can we be thankful enough for knowledge of God's own giving! Let us mock no intellectual effort. Let us disparage no man who adds a fact, however small, or even a final negation, to the realm of science. But let us be thankful that, for spiritual requirements, there is small need of mere intellectual effort. It was not on a peak, splendid with virgin snow, and till then untouched by human foot, that Jesus was transfigured, but on a hill green to the summit, and which could be scaled with no great effort; nor was it from the top of even Olivet, but a little distance up the side, that He ascended to heaven. And that epistle of John has no high-sounding words; but it has truths which, if they were abiding in us, would make us immortal—truths which, coming forth from God, can lead us back to Him again. In its balmy clime the Alpine traveller may be glad to rest his weary limbs, and heal his broken bones; and on its bread from heaven the deep-sea dredger may be thankful to feast who has been long dropping his sounding-line into deep problems and dark mysteries, and who has "grown old in drawing nothing up."

God is Love. This single announcement of the beloved disciple, contradicted by so many appearances, yet carrying its own evidence; in the world around us met by many a no and many a murmur, and from the caverns of despair fetching up a fiendish laughter, and yet countersigned by every fragment of Jehovah's handwriting

on the ruined tablets of the heart, and in trumpet-tones reverberated from the hills of immortality—this shortest of sentences and most summary of gospels, which a breath can utter, and which a signet-ring can contain, is the truth which, shining bright in the Advent, will overspread the world in the millennium's mild lustre—the truth on which no man has mused too much, even although he has pondered it all his days, and to which no anthem can do justice, except that in which golden harps mingle, and in which the redeemed from among men are helped by the seraphim.

What is this, however, which comes after? In some respects the sublimest book of the Bible, but, withal, the darkest and most difficult. With its plagues and its earthquakes, with its woes and its vials, in startling contrast to the bland glories of the Gospel and Epistles, the Apocalypse shows that it was not without reason that its author was named beforehand a "son of thunder."

> "And yet as every cloud that spreads above,
> And veileth love, itself is love,"

so also the storm which breaks up atmospheric stagnation —the lightning by which lurid vapours are scattered and the firmament once more is cleared, is aught but a malignant visitant; and, distressing as it may be to read of battles where the blood comes up to the horses' bridles, and plagues in which a third portion of the species perish, we must not forget that all this is the adjustment of a wise and holy benevolence, banishing evil to its own place, and securing for righteousness an uninterrupted and universal reign. Nor, perhaps, has any book done

more to keep the Church heroic and high-hearted. Expanding the Saviour's warning,—"In the world ye shall have tribulation, in Me ye shall have peace," it has been a continual comforter in persecution; and, whilst its martyrs, crying, "Lord, how long?" have helped to uphold the patience of the saints, the indestructibility of truth and the eventual efficacy of every good confession have been taught by the resurrection of the witnesses. To every phase of waning zeal, of decaying faith, of incipient error, of careless conduct, the messages to the seven Churches have administered antidotes, correctives, stimulants; and, whilst to the banished Hebrew it has given a better home in the New Jerusalem, and to the Christian's heaven has imparted an aspect at once lifelike and lovely, let us not forget the majesty with which it has invested a glorified Redeemer, presenting Him to olden affection with stars in His right hand, and burning feet, and a voice like many waters, and a face too bright to look upon. Nor rate it lightly that, through the congenial mind of John—a mind which must have been artistic—there has got into the mind of Christendom a strain of lofty music and a style of matchless imagery; for where is the picture-gallery that can do justice to the Pale Horse and his Rider?—to the Angel in the Sun?—to the Sea of Glass and Fire commingled, with the harping victors standing on it?—to the Great White Throne, and from the face of the descending Judge fleeing away both earth and heaven? What pencil can do justice to the Tree of Life, viewing its twelve manner of fruits reflected in the crystal river;—or who can paint the

pearly gates and the jasper walls, and that glory of God which is at once the sun and the sanctuary, the light and the temple of the sinless city? Or where is the choir which can give us a notion of the ten thousand times ten thousand singing with loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing?"

Till the Church required, or was ready to receive such books, John tarried; and then, hearing his prayer, "Even so, come Lord Jesus," the Master came. The task was done, and the faithful servant was released.

John tarried long. If he had foreseen that there should elapse near seventy years before he rejoined his Saviour, it would have seemed a fearful interval. And, no doubt, at times he must have wearied, and cried very wistfully, "Come, Lord Jesus." But it is over now, and,—

> "When the shore is won at last,
> Who will count the billows past?"[1]

On the whole, however, it must have been a happy life: for whether it be in this world or any other, "he that dwelleth in love," cannot live too long; where the devout and benevolent affections are in active exercise, existence can bring no tedium. As Mrs. Schimmelpenninck exclaimed, when told of a Christian who led a dejected life, "A Christian, and not happy! I am now sixty-eight! I am far happier than I was at twenty, and that principally because the Lord has shown me more of Himself." Then, after a pause, she added, "Not that I should speak of happiness when I think of my melancholic temperament,

[1] Keble.

and the deserts I often have to pass through; but even the sound of the living water to the traveller in the wastes of Africa is less sweet than the love of God to my soul."[1] In the same spirit, at the age of seventy-four, we find another wise and cheerful believer writing, "Goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life. My trials have been few compared with my comforts. My pleasures have been cheap and simple, and therefore very numerous. I have enjoyed without satiety the seasons and the sceneries of nature. I have relished the bounties of Providence, using them with moderation and thankfulness. I have delighted in the means of grace; unutterable have been my delights in studying and perusing the Scripture. How have I verified the words of Young, 'Retire, and read thy Bible to be gay.'"[2] All are not equally favoured. With some it has been a bleak spring and a rainy summer. Yet wherever there is true religion there will be a cordial acknowledgment that the purest, sweetest joys are those which flow from God's friendship, and which are found at a throne of grace. And whether it be in words express, or in the language of tranquil looks, and a calm and kindly walk, it is a blessed thing to be able to publish God's praise, and tell the generation following, "This God can supply all your need: He can keep you safe, and make you happy."

[1] *Life of Mary Anne Schimmelpenninck*, third edition, p. 468.
[2] *Autobiography of the Rev. W. Jay*, p. 153.

IX.

"FOLLOW ME."

"And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me."
JOHN XXI. 19.

As understood by Simon, and as designed by his Master, this was a summons to martyrdom; and to his subsequent career it may well have imparted a solemn self-devoted sensation. The baptism with which his Lord had been baptized now awaited himself, and he could not hope to get out of the world by any of the more easy exits. For him there was to be no euthanasia, no gentle falling on sleep—but others would gird him, and carry him whither he would not, even to that terrible cross. And like one who had sentence of death in himself, what henceforward was the worth of anything earthly? The house at Capernaum no home, the boat no property, his wife a prospective widow: no one to live for now but Christ, nothing now to do except to feed the sheep and follow Jesus.

So was it with myriads of the early Christians, and so from age to age has it been with entire communities. Thus has faith been fostered, and a lofty life been led by men who made this their motto, "None but Christ," and who in modern society have left the noblest elements it possesses.

But, prepared as every Christian should be to follow Christ to prison and to death, it would be aside from the purpose to speak as if this were the case in modern England, or as if, in saying to ourselves, "Follow me," the Lord Jesus were calling us to spend years in the dungeon, or to close life on the scaffold.

No, my friends; He calls us to walk in His steps, and copy His pattern. He bids us keep close to Himself, and, as nearly as the altered conditions permit, He invites us to repeat His career. In a sense very intelligible, He says, "If any man will be my disciple, let him take up his cross, and deny himself, and come after me."

And surely it is a delightful thought, that one such life has been led in this world of ours. To some of us it would be a new sensation, when evening closed, to look back on a single day rightly spent—nothing omitted, nothing blundered, nothing wrong in thought, nothing rashly spoken. But here is one who lived, not separate from His brethren, but separate from sin, and who could look back, not on a single day, but on entire existence exempt from all evil, and who to God presented, day by day, on behalf of His people, an unsullied oblation, a spotless sanctity, a perfect obedience. It is delightful and amazing to think that with materials such as are placed at our own disposal, in a climate not the most bracing, in a body by no means proof against pain or defiant of fatigue, in a society not the most moral or devout, going about from place to place with companions who had no inspiration to contribute, and usually sojourning where there was no seclusion and little sympathy, there should have been led a life so per-

lect, that at its close there was nothing to regret, and if it had been repeated there was nothing to improve. And surely it makes the Christian's career the highest possible that he is called to be Christ's follower, and that he has it set to him as his problem to live a life the likest possible to His in this our present time.

You understand? You are not called to live an Oriental life under northern skies, or a patriarchal life in modern Europe, any more than an angel life in the midst of men. You are not asked to speak Hebrew, either original or translated, nor are you bidden wear any peculiar garb, or affect any singular appearance; but you are invited to study that great history which supplies the perfect and universal pattern, and here in London, under our murky firmament, with neighbours quite ordinary, some of them not religious, and many not at all romantic, you are asked to come a little nearer Christ, and as a result of that you are promised, "If any man follow me, he shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." You are encouraged to hope for an existence richer and larger and more truly illustrious than any known amongst the sons of men, a life radiant with God's own light, and exuberant with conscious immortality.

Follow Christ, and you shall never be far from the Father. That pleasant countenance with which the Father beheld the well-beloved Son extends to all His followers—to all who, in faith and affection, gather round Him or go after Him, like this little band beside the Lake of Galilee.

Follow Christ, and you will learn to do things as He did them. You will learn to feed the sheep or the lambs

as He fed them—warning, reproving, exhorting, with a kindred long-suffering. You will learn to be calm amidst astounding insult; and, what is harder still, you will learn to be kind to most unattractive misery. You will learn to be meek and lowly—magnanimous towards the injurious—accessible to ignorance, to conscious guilt, and poverty. You will learn to meet temptation with "Thus it is written;" and for trial you will learn to prepare by praying more earnestly.

Follow Christ, and He will conduct you where no other can take you. I do not mean merely in that better life beyond to which He is the only entrance; but in this present world there are heights of attainment and regions of joy which are only reached in His company. All know something of the spell exerted by a master spirit—as when to Beza's learning and liveliness Calvin added force and firmness, and as when Melanchthon's mild convictions were, under God, by his energetic colleague quickened up into evangelistic fervour. So, infinitely rather, when the Master is Christ and the moulding power the Holy Spirit. Both Peter and John loved Christ. It would be hard to say which loved Him most, but it is safe to say, that but for that love they would never have stood out from the mass of their undistinguished contemporaries; they would have gone down to nameless graves with neighbour Galileans. But Jesus called them to Himself, and they rose and left all, and followed Him; and whilst in the mind and temperament of each He left all that was fundamental, Peter's warm rapidity was mellowed by the higher wisdom, John's silent intuition found an object in the incarnate Word,

and an utterance amidst the Asiatic Churches. And although that following of the Master led the one to Herod's prison and the other to an isle called Patmos, He who sent His angel to the one and came Himself to the other, so transfigured the spot, that alongside of his captive the Emperor was poorly lodged, and the guilty Herod was greatly to be pitied;—for that dungeon was draped in the light inaccessible, and to that ocean rock came a Visitant, with a voice like the cataract sounding, who said to the exile, "Fear not, I am the First and the Last." And so, if you are rightly aspiring, you will not rejoice because your name is written on earth; you will seek to have it known in heaven. You will seek to have it engraved on the breastplate—the heart of the great High Priest; and, as in loving communion and growing like-mindedness you continue to follow Him, He will raise you above paltry ambition—above the sordid tastes and sinful ways of the world around you—above the evil habits and unholy passions which at present most deeply distress you. As you follow on you will come to know Him better and trust Him more, and admitted to a communion of which the world knows nothing, you will at last find yourself looking down on earthly cares and solicitudes, on tumults of the people and national commotions, from heights such as the mere sage or statesman never scaled; and it will not be "a voice like a falling star," but the vision of a rising one, which proclaims your promotion—gone to shine in the firmament for ever and ever.

Finally, if you keep on to follow Christ, He will take you up where all others leave you. One by one the com-

panions of the pilgrimage drop off and disappear. If you are young, father and mother will forsake you; if you are older, the friends and fellow-travellers who cheer the road will always be changing, and some of the most valued will pass on before. And at last that mysterious limit will be reached where the rest can come no further; and as one by one the senses close—as in the thick fog dear faces fade away, and as far down the strand fond and familiar voices cease to overtake you, a countenance that you have never seen before, and which yet you know full well, will say, as plainly as the Supreme of Loveliness can say, "It is I: be not afraid;" and so with gladness and rejoicing shall you be brought into the palace of the King, and there you shall abide.

Do you, then, dear friends, who are still leading lives unreal, unworthy, unhappy, come to Christ; and you who profess to be disciples, follow the Master. Follow with your eye fixed on His pattern, and with a prayer ascending for the strengthening aids of His Spirit. Follow Him as you go out to teach your class this afternoon, or as you gather your children round you to tell them of His love. Follow Him as you sit in the sickroom of your friend the long night or the lonely day, or as to your own lips you raise the cup of weariness and pain. Follow Him as you go forth to the task of the morrow, and do with might the work He assigns; and follow Him as with pleasant looks or a helping hand you cheer a comrade struggling through his toil. And if thus you follow, the Forerunner will never be far away. His right hand will sustain you; and, like Mr. Standfast, if it be calm on the day of your depar-

ture, you may be able to leave like testimony: "I am now at the end of my journey; my toilsome days are over. I am going now to see that head which was crowned with thorns, and that face that was spit upon for me. I have formerly lived by hearsay and faith; but now I go where I shall live by sight, and shall be with Him in whose company I delight. I have loved to hear Him spoken of, and wherever I have seen the print of His shoe in the earth, there have I coveted to set my foot also."

X.

THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE FORERUNNER.

"Follow thou me."—JOHN XXI. 19.

"FOLLOW ME," said the Lord Jesus; and hardly had Peter and John made a movement to comply, when He vanished from their sight. "Follow Me," and a few days afterwards He led them out as far as to Bethany, and whilst still in the act of blessing them, He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven. They did not go with Him. Their "natural" bodies could not keep pace with His, now "spiritual" and glorified; and whilst His immortal form soared upward, they were not caught up with Him in the air. But although their bodies remained on earth, their affections followed. Their hearts went with Him, and the whole of life's remainder was an effort to overtake Him. "Follow me" was henceforward their motto, and gave consistency and meaning to all they did. In that upper chamber where the next ten days passed in prayer, they felt that He was not far away; and at Pentecost, in the outpouring of the Spirit, they found Him in their midst once more. It was in His name and in communion with Him that they preached their wonderful sermons, and said to the lame and paralytic, "Arise." It

was as followers of Jesus that they calmly encountered frantic mobs and angry rulers; and not less cheerfully than they went to the prison made bright by His presence, did they carry the cross endeared by His pattern. Above all, when their lives came out so unprecedented and unique —in disinterestedness and self-devotement, in elevation and beneficence, not only in advance of all others, but a new thing in the earth,—men took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus. As followers of Christ they distanced the rest of mankind.

That mighty Magnet has not lost its attractive power. An unseen Saviour is still drawing many after him. There are at this moment lives on earth which, but for the influence of Christ's example and the inspiration of Christ's Spirit, would have been impossible. There are some who have taken Him for their pattern, and who, on the strength of an absorbing affection, have risen to a height of devotion and heavenly-mindedness at which we can only gaze with distant wonder; and there are others who would feel it almost presumptuous to speak of Christ as in any sense their model, on whom His Spirit has so wrought that it has made them very different from what they once were, and who in some particular or other have so learned the mind which was in Christ, that on the strength of that single feature they are paragons of some special grace or virtue.

One day, thinking to amuse him, his wife read to Dr. Judson some newspaper notices, in which he was compared to one or other of the apostles. He was exceedingly distressed, and then he added, "Nor do I want to be like

them. I do not want to be like Paul, nor Apollos, nor Cephas, nor any mere man. I want to be like Christ. We have only one perfectly safe Exemplar—only one who, tempted like as we are in every point, is still without sin. I want to follow Him only—copy His teachings, drink in His spirit, place my feet in His footprints, and measure their shortcomings by these, and these alone. Oh to be more like Christ!" Such had long been his aspiration; and to a mind not naturally the most prepossessing it gave an unworldly charm, and more than human mastery. Panting after perfection, he strove to subdue every sinful habit and senseward tendency. Finding that for want of funds the Mission was languishing, he cast into the treasury his patrimonial estate. Finding that his nicety and love of neatness interfered with his labours among the filthy Karens, he sought to vanquish this repugnance by nursing those sick of most loathsome diseases. Finding that his youthful love of fame was not utterly extinguished, he threw into the fire his correspondence, including a letter of thanks he had received from the Governor-General of India, and every document which might contribute to his posthumous renown. And finding that his soul still clave unto the earth, he took temporary leave of all his friends, and, retiring into a hut on the edge of the jungle, and subsisting on a little rice, for several weeks he gave himself entirely to communion with God. And although some may think that in all this he strove to "wind himself too high," and although, in mere ascetic abnegations, it may turn out that we are following not Jesus but John the Baptist, it must not be forgotten

that low spiritual attainments or a languid faith will never raise a sunken people : if mountains are to be removed, if whole nations are to be lifted from Paganism and its miry pit, the Xavier or Zinzendorf, the Brainerd or Judson, who seeks to raise them up, would need himself to dwell on high ; he would need a strong arm and a firm hold on heaven.

To the evangelist we concede the foremost place amongst Christ's followers ; for his work is the hardest, and, where that work is successful, the reward is the greatest. But there are many who, without any special designation, and almost unawares to themselves, have proved excellent missionaries, and gone far to carry out the mind of the supreme Philanthropist. Such a service was rendered, first by Granville Sharpe, and then by Clarkson and Wilberforce, when, on the fulcrum of a glorious first principle in the British Constitution working their lever, they first established the point that in England no man can be a slave, and then from the British empire rolled off the crime of the slave-trade, and thus brought round that general emancipation in which France and the Netherlands have so honourably joined. Such a service was rendered by Michael Thomas Sadler, when, moved with compassion, he took up the case of our factory children, and, fighting their battle in Parliament and on platforms, at last gained for them a little daily leisure, and opportunity to receive that Christian education of which, in common with the training of the Sabbath-school, we see the results in the new race of operatives, so manly and so much-enduring. Such a service has been rendered by

every one who, without self-seeking, has in faith and simplicity taken up the work which God gave him to do. As by one approach you enter the valleys of Piedmont, you come on a school-house with the gable inscribed, "Whosoever passes this way, let him bless the name of Colonel Beckwith:" and so in every village you find dearer than any other earthly name, the memory of that good soldier who, disabled at Waterloo, gave forty years to those Waldenses whom he chanced to visit, building their schools, relieving their poverty, and striving to obtain for them those civil privileges which are now nearly equal to our own. In like manner, when in any dark place of Belgium or France, you come on a light clearly shining, and trace its pedigree—when you ask the earnest preacher or colporteur whence he comes—in all likelihood you are sent back to Geneva and its Evangelical School; in other words, you find that this sacred fire was kindled at the lamp which Robert Haldane fetched from Scotland half a century since, and which now sheds from Helvetian mountains a richer light than any ever left by the rosiest sunset on their peaks of snow. Thus it was that when in 1831 cholera was raging in Hamburg, and even near relatives in their terror ran away from the stricken, one weak woman, strong in God, withstood the panic, and with exquisite delicacy and inexhaustible loving-kindness, ministering to the sufferers, gathered round herself such a halo of angelhood that she became the correspondent of queens and the pride of her city, and found the only recompense she sought in instituting that Society of Deaconesses and Friends of the Poor who have done so

much for Germany, and of whom we can never think except in connexion with Amelia Sieveking, as again when we think of her we are constrained to think of that Divine Sufferer who made her so rich in His tender mercy, and so beautiful in His salvation.

Every feat of philanthropy, every plan conducive to human welfare, may be traced up to the self-same origin. Sometimes through curious channels, through dark and dismal conduits, it flows from the "fountain opened to the house of David;" even although it be a monkish perversion, or a secularist plagiarism, for the origin of any kind or beneficent idea we are obliged to go back to that best of benefactors, who taught the blessedness of giving, and who, through the matchless generosity of His own self-sacrifice, and through the presence of His perpetual almoner and evangelist, the Church, is exerting evermore a softening influence on the heart of Christendom.

You fear, however, that all this is beyond your reach. You say that you cannot hope to do anything great or originate anything novel. But it is not this that is needed. Great plans seldom come to much. The projector plants a whole pumpkin and expects a vegetable prodigy; but all the crop is a sprawling gourd, destined to perish at the first touch of winter. God plants an acorn or a little scaly carpel, and although for years the seedling is hardly visible, at last the oak or cedar can shelter a congregation beneath its canopy, and it lives for centuries. The work which you have presently in hand is great enough, if it be to protect and foster "trees of God;" and it is not so much by striking out new plans as by putting fresh life into the

old ones, that you will best serve your generation, and exemplify the power of the gospel.

In the words of a keen observer and powerful thinker, "The pressing need of our faith is not simply faithful evangelists to proclaim its doctrines, but legions of men consecrating their worldly vocations, witnessing to that truth on which much scepticism prevails, that Christianity, so received as to become an integral part of a man, is omnipotent to keep him from the evil, not by taking him out of the world, but by making him victorious over it. He is a most worthy disciple of Christ, who, like Palissy, or Buxton, or Budgett, or Perthes, exhibits religion as 'the right use of a man's whole self'—as the one thing which gives dignity and nobility to what is in itself sordid and earthly—as the mainspring of earnest and successful strivings after loftier ends and a purer life—as the power outside of and within man which, lifting up conduct in the individual, raises the community, and not as a state of mind mystical, and in active life unattainable, high up among things intangible, separated from contact with work-a-day life, appropriate to Sabbath-days and special hours, to leisure, old age, and deathbeds. Every man who is 'diligent in business, serving the Lord,' is a sermon brimful of the energies of life and truth, a witness to the comprehensiveness and adaptability of Christ's religion, a preacher of righteousness in scenes where none can preach so effectively or so well."[1]

[1] *North British Review*, Nov. 1862, p. 274. For an eloquent exposition of an all-embracing and all-pervading Christianity in connexion with art, literature, and mental science, see the "Essays" of Peter Bayne, Esq.

To this want of the age, to this "need of our faith," I trust many here will seek to contribute. I trust that there are not a few who, in answer to the question, "Lovest thou me?" cannot help saying, "Yes, we do;" and there are others who, from distrusting themselves, or misunderstanding Him, would be afraid to say so much, but in whose behalf I fondly hope that He "who knoweth all things," is pleased to say it for them. If so, the best token of attachment and loyalty is to follow Him fully. Try to give such a representation of His religion as will be true to Himself and appropriate to your own position, and then it cannot fail to be attractive and impressive to others.

Amongst those features of the great Example which all may study and seek to assimilate, let me mention first, His sublime veracity. "For this cause came I into the world," as He himself stated it, "that I should bear witness to the truth;" and to the truth so constant was His witness, that many would fain have sent Him out of the world again. Nor was it merely particular truths to which He testified. He was himself the Truth, the Amen, the great Reality, whom it was impossible to know too thoroughly, or trust too entirely; and, whilst from His own mouth guile never proceeded, there never was a presence in which affectations and hypocrisies felt so uncomfortable—gasping, and out of their element, and like to give up the ghost. In order to have the mind of Christ we must share His truthfulness. The temptations are terrible. Not to speak of malignant falsehoods—lies of cowardice, lies of convenience, lies of complaisance,—

there are such temptations to suppress and exaggerate, to distort and to colour, to make promises in levity and to offer plausible apologies for failure, that it is no easy attainment, a perfect truthfulness. But with the lustre which it sheds, and with the solid and secure sensation which it imparts to its possessor, it is a pearl of great price, and one of the best gifts which the transforming Spirit imparts. He alone can carry us over the initial difficulty, and by putting truth in the inward parts—by making ourselves realities, He makes it possible to speak the truth and to live it. Teaching more than a poor verbal accuracy, imparting that courage which is constitutionally honest, and curbing those evil passions, covetousness, envy, malice, which are "always liars;" above all, by bringing the will into harmony with God and His holy law, He can put far from us the way of lying, and will enable us to follow along His shining track the Faithful and True Witness.

Again: Christ Jesus hath left us a pattern in His kindness. It is wonderful how much misery and discomfort one ill-conditioned being can diffuse—in a household a sour or sulky inmate, in a parish or county a litigious landowner, in an empire a despot like Philip the Second or Ivan the Terrible, with a craze which takes the form of cruelty. But great as is the might of Apollyon, greater is the might of the Saviour; and much as the devil has done in the way of destroying, Christ has wrought far greater wonders in the way of restoring. Himself the Son of God incarnate, and crowning three years of the busiest beneficence by a deed of mercy, whose influence

eternity cannot exhaust, and whose outgoings are felt in all worlds—one lesson of His life is the amount of consolation, and encouragement, and holy impulse, which can be diffused from a single presence in its progress through one short day, when there are no conflicting elements—when the fountain never intermits, when the light is never veiled. O my friends, let us dwell on the loving-kindness of our Lord. Let us muse on that walk of mercy which, wherever it trod, hath left the air so balmy and the grass so green. Let us try to share His joy who found a solace which others knew not in pardoning sin and transforming sorrow. And if ours cannot often be the ecstasy of saving a soul alive, let us all the rather abound in those very needful and more numerous offices which take stumbling-blocks from the path, and thorns from the pillow, prejudices from the mind, and wounds from the spirit. Let ours be the Christ-like happiness of showing kindness; and as we try to alleviate anguish, as we visit the house of mourning, as we deal forth bread to the hungry, we shall find it a gainful partnership to be fellow-workers with the Man of mercies. For our own bleeding spirit, we shall find that there is no better balsam than the wine and oil which we pour into the wounds of a forlorn fellow-traveller. To lighten our own load, we shall find that the best expedient is to bear another's burden. Of all sunshine, we shall find that the most potent for dissipating our own darkness is the smile we give to others. And if any regret there be, it will be to find that no benefaction is absolutely returnless and gratuitous; for send it wheresoever we may, in some

shape or other it is sure to come back into our own bosom.

Once more: follow Christ in that wonderful faculty which turned every opportunity to the best account. His immediate attendants were, most of them, crude in their views, and confused in their notions, and the hosts who invited Him, and the audiences which gathered round Him, seldom supplied inviting themes of discourse. But in any company, starting from any topic, He soon carried His hearers into that heaven from which He came, or into the presence of that Father whom He so ardently loved, and so earnestly sought to make known. And if there were like elevation in our minds, our presence would be a continual influence, evoking good and repressing evil. Profanity and ribaldry would soon sink abashed from our silence or our frown, and timid piety would soon know where to go for a comforter or counsellor. For if there be a frightful contagion in evil, there is in faith and earnestness a divine ascendency. One serious thinker can do much to arrest frivolity, even as one cheerful countenance can go far to brighten a gloomy company—even as one high-toned spirit can go far to raise to his own level a large assembly.

To instance in nothing else: follow Christ in His humility. "Let the mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus, who humbled himself, and made himself of no reputation." Learn of Him, for He is meek and lowly. Although the meekness of the believer cannot be quite the same as the humility of the self-emptying Saviour, in some things they agree. Whether it be in Christ or the Christian.

there is in true humility nothing abject, nothing self-disparaging; on the other hand, there is affability, there is self-forgetfulness, there is contentment, there is submission to God's will, there is cheerful, unquestioning obedience. And this meek and quiet spirit is in the sight of God of great price.

"Through the strait gate of life she passes, stooping,
With sandals on her feet;
And pure-eyed graces, with linked palms, come trooping,
Their sister fair to greet.

The angels bend their eyes upon her goings,
And guard her from annoy;
Heaven fills her quiet heart with overflowings
Of calm celestial joy.

The Saviour loves her, for she wears the vesture
With which He walked on earth;
And through her child-like glance, and step, and gesture,
He knows her heavenly birth.

The white-robed saints, the Throne-steps singing under,
Their state all meekly wear;
Their pauseless praise wells up from hearts which wonder
That ever they came there."[1]

[1] *Vision of Prophecy*, etc., by J. D. Burns, p. 256.

NOTES.

Note A, p. 244.

"None of the disciples durst ask him, Who art thou?"

"In order to give them a further proof that He was a real man and no phantom, although they had already seen His body with their eyes, and heard it with their ears, and touched it with their hands, He now chose to join them in taking food. Accordingly He invited them to a prepared repast [and bade them add fishes which they themselves had caught]. The disciples took their places, but they were silent; for the immortal majesty of His form deprived them of their wonted confidence. Still, the more glorious appearance notwithstanding, they recognised their Master."—*Erasmi Paraphrasis.* In this we fancy that Erasmus is nearer the mark than Calvin, who explains—"The disciples dared not to ask Christ; that is, they were afraid of doing Him wrong: so clear and conspicuous were the signs by which He had revealed Himself." The evangelist plainly indicates that, on the one hand, there was no need to ask, "Who art thou?" for His identity was obvious: already, and before the conversation with Peter began, they "knew that it was the Lord;" but, on the other hand, if they had felt the same freedom and familiarity as in days of old, they might have satisfied their curiosity by asking many questions. As it was, awed and overpowered by His majesty, they did not venture to ask so much as "Who

art thou?" but sate down to "dine" in happy and reverential silence.

"I take these words to imply that they sat down to the meal in silence, wondering at, while at the same time they well knew, Him who was their Host."—Alford's *Greek Testament.*

NOTE B, p. 245.

"*Feed my Lambs.*"

"The main object of the Lord in His rejoinder, 'Feed my sheep,' 'Feed my lambs,' is not to say, 'Show then thy love in act,' but rather, 'I restore to thee thy apostolic function; this grace is thine, that thou shalt yet be a chief shepherd of my flock.' It implies, therefore, the fullest forgiveness of the past, since none but the forgiven could rightly declare the forgiveness of God."—Trench, *Notes on the Miracles*, 5th ed., p. 465. "That the Lord, looking at the commencement and first state of His flock, should first commit His tender lambs to be cared for, is very natural. They still are liable to fall, like Peter; and need first to be fed with love by him whom love had cared for and lifted up. He who had so much reason to humble himself, should even on that account condescend to the little ones and the feeble; this is obviously the first point of connexion."—Stier's *Words of the Lord Jesus*, vol. viii. p. 243.

NOTE C, p. 245.

The thrice-repeated Question.

"O apostle, be not grieved! Answer once, answer again, answer the third time. Now that you love, let the good confession gain a threefold triumph, even as presumption was

thrice vanquished through fear. That which was three times 'bound,' should be three times 'loosed.' Let love untie what timidity bound."—*Augustini Sermones*, ccxcv. 4. Not less to the purpose is the annotation of Grotius:—"Wonderful is the wisdom of Christ, who in these few words contrives that Peter shall render satisfaction both to Himself, whom he had thrice denied, and to those colleagues to whom he had preferred himself: showing how the Church should exercise its discipline (exemplum dans disciplinæ ecclesiasticæ)." "With the threefold denial corresponds the tripal hammer-stroke of this question on the heart of Peter."—Tholuck *on John*, p. 424. And with characteristic sagacity it is remarked by the elder Dr. M'Crie:—"The question was, in itself, highly appropriate, and calculated to draw forth various emotions besides that of grief. We might have supposed that it would have been, 'Art thou sorry for having denied me?'—but it was proposed by Him who knows how to touch the chord which makes the whole soul vibrate: 'Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?' Had Peter been irritated or displeased by this close examination, he would either have repeated his former offence, and broken for ever with his Master, or he would have preserved a sullen silence, or he would have given (as we say) a short answer. But he replies as before, only with somewhat more fervour and earnestness. His grief, instead of preventing, prompted him to this further profession. He was anxious to remove every shadow of suspicion, and his generous breast would have burst had he not relieved it by avouching attachment, for the third time, to Him whom he had thrice denied."—*Works of T. M'Crie, D.D.*, vol. iv. p. 321.

Perhaps it is well to mention that in the original there is a variation of phraseology which our translation does not indicate. If we may accept Tregelles's reading προβάτιά in verse 17, the dialogue would be something to this effect, as far as we can distinguish the force of ἀγαπᾷς and φιλεῖς:—

Jesus. "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these [others]?"

Peter. "Yea, Lord, thou knowest that thou art dear to me."

Jesus. "Feed my lambs."—"Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?"

Peter. "Yea, Lord, thou knowest that thou art dear to me."

Jesus. "Feed my sheep."—"Simon, son of Jonas, am I dear to thee?"

Peter. "Lord, thou knowest all things: thou knowest that thou art dear to me."

Jesus. "Feed my dear flock."

Note D, p. 266.

Galilean Fishes.

Although the press continues to pour forth works on Palestine with a profusion only surpassed by the books on prophecy, it is curious how many points still need elucidation. One of these is the ichthyology of the Sea of Tiberias, and of the Jordan with its tributaries, a subject which, from the singular conditions of that system of lakes and streams, should be very interesting to the naturalist, and which ought not to be without its interest to the reader of the Bible. But we really know more about the productions of the newly-discovered lakes in Africa than about the inhabitants of waters in themselves and their history so wonderful, and which multitudes of British and American tourists are visiting every year. In the private residences of England there must be gallons of water from the Jordan; but even in the British Museum there are not, as far as we know, any specimens of fish from the Lake of Galilee.[1] From analogy, and on the authority of

[1] The only one we know of is one which we have not seen—a specimen lately added to the Biblical Museum of our friend William Dickson, Esq., Edinburgh.

writers as old as Bellonius and Cotovicus (quoted by Lampe, tom. iii. p. 737), we have no doubt that carp are to be found, and from the description in Hasselquist we are sure of the *Sparus Galilæus*. Our friend Mr. Carruthers writes:—"It belongs to the modern genus *Chromis*. There is no specimen of the *C. Galilæus* in the Museum; indeed, it is unknown, except from Hasselquist's very imperfect description. Dr. Günther says, judging from the Nile species of the same genus, it is likely to grow to the size of a foot and a half. Though very different from, it comes nearest to, our perch; and, like it, it is gregarious." The United States Expedition mentions five kinds of fish, "all good; viz., the 'Musht,' 'Abu Bût,' 'Huffâfah,' 'Abu Kisher,' and 'Burbût.' The musht, about one foot long, and four or five inches wide, resembles the sole."

NOTE E, p. 275.

"*Thou didst them unto me.*"

"In John Falk's Refuge at Weimar, when one of the boys had said the pious grace, 'Come, Lord Jesus, be our guest, and bless what Thou hast provided,' a little fellow looked up and said, 'Do tell me why the Lord Jesus never comes?' 'Dear child, only believe, and you may be sure He will come, for He does not despise our invitation.' 'I shall set Him a seat,' said the little fellow; and just then there was a knock at the door. A poor frozen apprentice entered, begging a night's lodging. He was made welcome; the chair stood empty for him; every child wanted him to have his plate; and one was lamenting that his bed was too small for the stranger, who was quite touched by such uncommon attentions. The little one had been thinking hard all the time. 'Jesus could not come, and so He sent this poor man in His

place; is that it?' 'Yes, dear child, that is just it. Every piece of bread, and every drink of water that we give to the poor or the sick, or the prisoners, for Jesus' sake, we give to Him. "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."'"—Stevenson's *Praying and Working*, p. 48.

NOTE F, p. 325.

Aspiration.

Of a life similarly lofty and ardent we have the aspirations embodied in the following prayer of Norris of Bemerton, who mused and sang on the same plains of Salisbury where George Herbert passed his years of cheerful piety: "My God! my happiness! who art as well the End as the Author of my being—who hast more perfection than I have desire, and art also seriously willing to quench my great thirst in the ocean of Thy perfection—I beseech Thee, show me Thy glory. Withdraw Thy hand from the cleft of the rock, and remove the bounds from the mount of Thy presence, that I may see Thee as Thou art, and ever dwell in the light of Thy beauty. I have long dwelt with vanity and emptiness, and have made myself weary in the pursuit of rest. Oh, let me not fail at last, after my many wanderings and disappointments, to be taken up into this true and only ark of repose and security, where I may for ever rest and for ever bless the Author of my happiness. In the meantime, strike, I beseech Thee, my soul with such lively apprehension of Thy excellences, such bright irradiations of Thy Divine light, that I may see enough to love Thee infinitely, to depend on Thee for my happiness entirely, and to bear up my spirit under the greatest aridities and dejections with the delightful prospect of

Thy glories. Oh, let me sit down under this Thy shadow with great delight, till the fruit of the tree of life shall be sweet to my taste. Let me stay and entertain my longing soul with the contemplation of Thy beauty, till Thou shalt bring me into Thy banqueting-house, where vision shall be the support of my spirit, and Thy banner over me shall be love. Grant this, O my God, my happiness, for the sake of Thy great love, and of the Son of Thy love, Christ Jesus. Amen."—Norris's *Miscellanies*, 1710, p. 226. In the same spirit, but with a more impatient eagerness, writes Samuel Rutherford: "Oh that time would post faster, and hasten our communion with that Fairest among the sons of men! But, a few years will do our turn, and the soldier's hour-glass will soon run out. I am sure the saints, at their best, are but strangers to the weight and worth of the incomparable excellency of Immanuel. We know not the half of what we love when we love Christ."

THE HAPPY HOME.

I.

THE FRIEND OF THE PEOPLE.

Last century a Russian emperor gained much renown by the exertions and sacrifices he made for his dominions. Distressed at their savage state, and eager to introduce the arts and accomplishments of civilized nations, he resolved to become himself the engineer and preceptor of his people. Instead of sending a few clever men to glean what they could in foreign regions, he determined to be his own envoy, and leaving his Moscow palace, he set out to travel in Holland and Great Britain. He was particularly anxious to carry home the art of naval architecture; for he wisely judged that, without ships and seamen, his empire would never be able to turn its own resources to account. However, he soon found that no man could learn to be a shipbuilder by merely looking on; but, whatever it might need, Peter was determined to do. With a noble energy, he changed his gay clothing for the garb of a carpenter, and spent week after week in the building-yard at Saardam, wielding the hatchet, flourishing the tar-brush, and driving bolts till the pent-house rang again; and soon was he able to go home and teach his people how to build ships for themselves. No wonder that, whilst other

monarchs are depicted in purple and ermine, the artist should prefer representing Peter, the Czar of Muscovy, in his red woollen jacket, and crowned with the glazed hat of a sailor, with a timber-log for his throne and an adze for his sceptre. And no wonder that a grateful country should rear to his memory the proudest colossus in the world, and christen by his name its capital.

Far nobler than this achievement of the Emperor Peter, are some facts recorded in the history of philanthropy. It was a nobler thing, for instance, when, in order to gain personal knowledge of its horrors, and to be able to testify against them afterwards, an English gentleman took his passage in an African slaver, and submitted voluntarily to months of filth and fever, at the peril of his life, and to the hourly torture of his feelings. And still nobler was the conduct of those angelic missionaries who, finding no other way to introduce the gospel among the negroes of Barbadoes, sold themselves to slavery, and then told their fellow-bondsmen the news which sets the spirit free. And noblest of all, was the self-devotion of two Moravians, of whom some of you have read. They were filled with pity for the inmates of a fearful lazaretto. It was an enclosure in which persons afflicted with leprosy were confined; and so terrified for its contagion were the people, that once within the dismal gates, no one was suffered to quit them again. But the state of its doomed inmates so preyed on these compassionate men, that they resolved, at all hazard, to cheer them in captivity, and to try to save their souls. They counted the cost. They said, "Farewell freedom, farewell society, farewell happy sun and

healthy breezes," and passed the returnless portals, each a living sacrifice.

The state of our world touched with compassion the Son of God. He left His home in heaven, and came hither. The King of kings put off His glory. He came to this scene of guilt and misery. He left the adoring fellowship above, and came down among creatures who disliked Him, and could not comprehend Him. On His benevolent errand He alighted on this plague-stricken planet, and became for more than thirty years identified with its inmates, and in perpetual contact with its sin and its sorrow. And whilst His eye was intent on some bright consummation, He did not grudge to be for many years the exile and prisoner, and at last the victim.

It is interesting to remember the lot in human life which the Saviour selected. He had His choice. He might have chosen for His residence a mansion or a palace; but He chose for His domicile, so long as He had one, the cottage of a carpenter. He cast His earthly lot alongside of the labouring man; and besides the intentional lowlihood, there were other ends it answered.

It lent new dignity to labour. Some silly people feel it a disgrace to work; they blush to be detected in an act of industry. They fancy that it is dignity to have nothing to do, and a token of refinement to be able to do nothing. They forget that it is easy to be useless, and that it needs no talent to cumber the ground. But the Lord Jesus knew that it is best for the world when all are workers, and He conformed to the good rule of Palestine, which required every citizen to pursue some employment. And

instead of selecting a brilliant occupation, He gave Himself to a humble and commonplace calling, that we might learn how possible it is to rise to extraordinary usefulness from a very inconspicuous position.

And by this selection He left an example to working men. Rough work is no reason for rude manners, or a vulgar mind. Never did there traverse the globe a presence so pure and a fascination so divine, as moved about in the person of the "carpenter's son." So gentle in His dignity—so awful in His meekness—so winsome in His lovingness—so dexterous in diffusing happiness—so delicate in healing the wounds of sensitive spirits—so gracious in forestalling wishes; no rules of etiquette, no polish of society, can ever yield anew the same majestic suavity. Amid the daily drudgery, His soul was often swelling with its wondrous purpose; and whilst shaping for the boors of Galilee their implements of industry, His spirit was commercing with the sky. They are not little occupations, but little thoughts, and little notions, which make the little man; and the grandeur of mien, and the engaging manners which emerged from that Nazarene workshop, are a lesson to those who handle the hammer, the spade, or the shuttle. But far more,—the sanctity. In a town of bad repute—forced into the company of ruffians and blasphemers,—all the uncongenial fellowship showed Him the more conspicuously "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners." And if you complain that you are shut up to the society of loose and low-minded men—if constrained to listen to words ribald and profane, or to witness coarse debauchery—remember that it was

in the guise of a labouring man that the Saviour fought the world's corruption, and overcame. And if like to be worsted, cry for help to Him who, amongst His other memories of earth, remembers Galilee,—who, now that He has done with the carpenter's shop for ever, has not forgotten the surly neighbours, and the abandoned town; and whose solitary example deprived of its old significance the proverb, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?"

And by choosing this humble lot, the Saviour learned to sympathize with penury. Whatever wealthy bards may sing of the sweets of poverty, it is a painful thing to be very poor. To be a poor man's child, and look through the fence of the playground and envy richer boys for the sake of their many books, and yet be doomed to ignorance; to be apprenticed to some harsh stranger, and feel for ever banished from a mother's tenderness and a sister's love; to work when very weary; to work when the heart is sick and the head is sore; to see a wife or a darling child wasting away, and not be able to get the best advice; to hope that better food or purer air might set her up again, but that food you cannot buy, that air you need never hope to breathe; to be obliged to let her die; to come home from the daily task some evening, and see her sinking; to sit up all night, in hope to catch again those precious words you might have heard could you have afforded to stay at home all day, but never hear them; to have no mourners at the funeral, or even carry on your own shoulder through the heartless streets the light deal coffin; to see huddled into a promiscuous hole the dust which is

so dear to you, and not be allowed to mark the spot by planted flower or lowliest stone ; some bitter winter or some costly spring to barter for food the clock or the curious cupboard, or the *Henry's Commentary*, on which you prided yourself as the heirloom of a frugal family, and never be able to redeem it ; to feel that you are getting old—nothing laid aside, and present earnings scarce sufficient ; to change the parlour floor for the top storey, and the top storey for a single attic, and wonder what change will be the next ;—these and a thousand privations are the pains of poverty. And in the days when the world's Redeemer occupied the poor man's home, He was familiar with sights the parallels of these. He noted them. He entered into them. He shared them. Even at the time He did somewhat to relieve them. It was in such a scene that He let forth the first glimpse of His glory. The scanty store of wine had failed at a marriage-feast, and to relieve the embarrassment of His humble entertainers, He created a new supply. And it was in a similar scene that the second of His healing miracles was wrought, and His entrance to Simon's fishing hut was signalized by restoring from a fever his sick mother-in-law. And, not to dwell on the miracles of mercy which restored to the widow of Nain her only son, and to the sisters of Bethany their only brother, it is worth while to notice how many of His wonders were presents to the poor. A weary boatman has swept the waves all night and captured not a single fin : Jesus bids him drop the net in a particular spot, and instantly it welters with a silvery spoil. Again and again the eager throng hangs

round Him till the sun is setting, and it is discovered that there are only a few small loaves among all the fainting thousands; but He speaks the word, and as little loaves bulk out an endless banquet, the famished villagers rejoice in the rare repast. And though He did not grudge His cures to centurions and rulers of the synagogues, they were usually the poor and despised who craved and got the largest share: the woman who had spent on physicians all that she had; the impotent man at Bethesda; the Samaritan lepers; and Bartimeus the blind beggar. And thus would the kind Redeemer teach us, that if there are always to be the poor on earth, there will always be the poor man's friend in heaven. He would teach those sons of toil who are His true disciples, that in all their afflictions He is afflicted; that He knows their frame and feels their sorrow. And should these lines be read by one who is indigent in spite of all his industry, let him remember how it fared with the world's best benefactor when here below—let him remember that the Saviour himself had once nowhere to lay His head, and asking for a cup of cold water, could scarcely obtain it. But now that He has all power in heaven and earth, that Saviour is as tender as ever; and to you, oh children of want and woe! He says, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

But I hasten to notice the greatest boon which the Saviour purchased. Returning to an instance already mentioned:—Had you seen the devoted missionaries pass into the leper hospital, along with admiration of their kindness you would have felt a grievous pang at such an

immolation. To think that men in the height of health should thus be lost to the land of the living—that good men and generous should be buried quick in such a ghastly grave—it would have oppressed your spirit, and you could only have given grudging approbation to such a self-devotement. But if at the end of a certain term they had appeared at the gate again, and along with them a goodly band of the poor victims restored to perfect soundness; if it turned out that they had not only been able to mitigate much suffering, but in the case of every one who submitted to their treatment, had effected a perfect cure; and if, on examining the matter, the competent authorities declared that not only were these heroes of humanity themselves uninjured, but that those whom they brought with them were clean every whit, and might forthwith pass out into the world of the hale and the happy, you would be more than reconciled to the great price which purchased such a wondrous restoration. When Immanuel went into this world—when He first put human nature on, and in all His innocence identified Himself with the fate of sinful men, we might almost imagine the anxiety awakened by this "mystery of godliness" in any celestial spirit who did not foreknow the issue. But when that issue was developed—when, with a multitude which no man can number, rescued and restored, the mighty Redeemer reappeared at the gate of the lazaretto—when infinite purity and eternal justice and the holy law recognised not only an immaculate deliverer, but in all His ransomed company could detect no stain of sin, no spot of the old corrup-

tion—when it was pronounced that millions of plague-stricken beings were now so convalescent and so pure, that they might even pass the pearly gates and join the fellowship of angels, enough was seen to justify the self-denial, though that self-denial was the incarnation of the Son of God—enough to recompense the sacrifice, though that sacrifice was the death of a Divine Redeemer.

But this was the simple fact. An Angel of mercy, a Volunteer of pure compassion, the Saviour assumed our nature, and visited our world. The Word was made flesh, and dwelt amongst us. And coming into the world He came into a moral lazaretto. Young and old, rich and poor, every soul was smitten with sin's disgusting malady. None were holy; none sought after God. All were corrupt; all were, to God's pure eye, offensive; and all were sickening towards the second death. And by coming hither and taking on Him the human nature, the Son of God committed Himself to our woful case. He virtually declared that, unless He brought a convalescent company with Him, He would return to heaven no more. But the balsam which alone could heal this malady was found to be very costly. It must contain, as an ingredient, something which could expiate sin; such a compensation for the wrong it had done as would render God a just God in forgiving the sinner. And nothing, it was found, could atone for guilt, save blood Divine. But Jesus had counted the cost; and even this price He was prepared to pay. And He paid it. He offered Himself as the propitiation for sin, and He was accepted. And though amongst those whom He sought to save were atheists and infidels, mur-

derers and liars, blasphemers and sabbath-breakers, thieves and robbers, drunkards and debauchees—that one offering was infinite, and more than sufficed. It finished transgression, and the Supreme Judge and Lawgiver proclaimed it to the world, "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin." And reappearing at the gates of Paradise with His ransomed, "the gates lifted up their heads;" and having long since returned from that errand of kindness, and rejoined the acclaiming celestials, already has the King of Glory been followed by many a trophy of His life-giving death and peace-speaking blood. Dear reader, will not you be another? Will you not intrust your soul to One so skilful to heal, and so mighty to save? Will you not begin to sing that new song even here, "Thou art worthy; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood?" And will you not, from this time forward, give a higher place in your affections to that adorable Friend, "who, though he was rich, for your sakes became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich?"

II.

THE SHIP OF HEAVEN.

THE man was very poor, and one of those poor men who never make it any better. Always so laggard and so listless, he looked as if he had come into the world with only half his soul. Having no fondness for exertion, he had great faith in windfalls; and once or twice he was favoured with a windfall; but as he took no pains to secure it and turn it to account, the same fickle element which brought it soon wafted it away. His character was gone; his principles, never firm, were fast decaying; and betwixt laziness and bad habits, he was little better than the ruin of a man. He had a brother far away; but so many years had come and gone since last he was seen in those regions, that he was faintly recollected. Indeed, so long since was it, that this man had no remembrance of him. But one evening a messenger came to him, telling him that his brother lived, and, in token of his love, had sent him the present of a gallant ship, with all its cargo. The messenger found him in his dingy chamber; no fire on the hearth, no loaf in the cupboard, no pence in his pocket, no credit in that neighbourhood, bleak weather in the world, bleak feelings in his soul. And as with folded

arms he listened to the news, he neither wondered nor rejoiced. Sure enough it was a windfall; but he was not just then in a romantic or wistful mood, and so he heard it sullenly. No; he neither danced nor capered, neither laughed nor shouted, but coldly walked away—scarcely hoping, scarcely caring to find it true. And when, at last, he reached the port, and espied the ship, it dispelled all his boyish dreams of Eastern merchantmen. The masts were not palms, with silken cords furling the purple sails; nor did its bulwarks gild the water, and its beams of cedar scent the air. It was much like the barques around it—chafed and weathered, and bleached by the billows, and bore no outward token of a gorgeous freight. But stepping on board, as soon as the master of the vessel knew who he was, he addressed him respectfully, and descanted with glowing warmth on the glories and generosity of his absent brother, and then invited him below to feast his eyes on his new possession. There was gold, and the red ingots looked so rich and weighed in the hand so heavy; there were robes, stiff with embroidery, and bright with ruby and sapphire stars; there were spices such as the fervid sun distils from the fragrant soil in that exuberant zone, and dainties such as only load the tropic trees. Nor in the wealthy invoice had forethought and affection omitted any good; for there were even some herbs and anodynes of singular power; a balm which healed envenomed wounds; an ointment which brought back the failing sight; a cordial which kept from fainting, and a preparation which made the wearer proof against the fire. And there was a bulky parchment, the title-deeds to a large

domain somewhere in that sunny land; and along with all a letter, distinct and full, in the princely donor's autograph. Of that letter, the younger brother sat down and read a portion there; and as he read, he looked around him to see that it was all reality; and then he read again, and his lip quivered, and his eye filled, and as the letter dropped upon his lap, he smote upon his breast and called himself by some bitter name. And then he started up; and if you had only seen him—such an altered man; such energy, and yet such mildness; such affection, and withal such heroism as beamed of a sudden in his kindling countenance; you would have thought that, amidst its other wonders, that foreign ship had fetched the remainder of his soul. And so it had. From that day forward he was another man; grudging no labour, doing nothing by halves, his character changed, his reputation retrieved, his whole existence filled with a new consciousness and inspired by a new motive, and all his sanguine schemes and cheerful efforts converging towards the happy day which should transport him to the arms of that unseen brother.

Reader, have you lost heart about yourself? Once on a time you had some anxiety about character. You wished that you had greater strength of principle, and that your moral standing were more respectable. You envied the virtuous energy of those friends who can resist temptation, and combat successfully the evil influences around them. You have even wished that you could wake up some morning and find yourself a Christian; and you have sometimes hoped that this happiness might at length befall you. But there is, as yet, no sign of it. Startling

providences have passed over you, but they have not frightened you out of your evil habits; and, from time to time, amiable and engaging friends have gained ascendency over you, but they have not been able to allure you into the paths of piety. And now you are discouraged. You know that some vicious habit is getting a firmer and more fearful hold of you, and if you durst own it to yourself, you have now no hope of a lofty or virtuous future. You feel abject, and spiritless, and self-disgusted, and have nearly made up your mind to saunter slip-shod down the road to ruin.

You do not remember your Elder Brother, for He had left those regions before you were born. But this comes to tell you that He lives, and wishes you well. In the far country whither He has gone, He knows how you are, and is much concerned at your present condition. And He feels for you none the less that in all that land He is Himself the richest and the mightiest. And to show that, amidst all His glory, He is not ashamed to be called your brother, He has sent you a noble gift, a ship freighted with some of His choicest acquisitions, and bringing everything good for a man like you.

And be not vexed nor angry when I tell you that that ship of heaven is THE BIBLE. If, instead of touching at every land and coming to every door—if only a few Bibles arrived now and then ready-made and direct from heaven, and each addressed to some particular person—and if none besides were allowed to handle their contents or appropriate their treasures, how justly might the world envy that favoured few! But having purchased gifts for men

whilst here amongst us, and being highly exalted where He is gone, the Saviour, in His kindness, sends this heaven-laden book, this celestial argosy, to all His brethren here below, and each alike is welcome to its costly freight. Despise it not! There is nothing dazzling in its exterior. It is plain and unpretending. No rainbow lights its margin, nor do phosphorescent letters come and go on its azure pages. But the wealth of the Indian carac is neither its timbers nor its rigging; it hides its treasure in the hold. The wonder of the Bible is neither its binding nor its type—nay, not even (though these are wonderful) its language and its style. It makes God glorious and the reader blessed by the wealth it carries, and the truths it tells.

To recite at full the letter would take too long. A brother's heart yearns in it all; but what a holy and what an exalted brother! He informs you that all power is given Him in heaven and earth, and that from His Father He has received such ample authority that all throughout these dominions, life and death are in His hands. He says that He is grieved to know your wretched position, but He bids you not lose heart; for if you only take advantage of what He has sent you, there will be an end of your misery. And He adds that, freely and lovingly as He forwards these gifts, they cost Him much; they have cost Him labour and sorrow, groans and anguish, tears and blood. He begs that you will take frankly what is given kindly, and assures you that nothing will gladden Him more than to hail you to His home and instal you in His kingdom. And lest there be any matter which you do

not rightly understand, and on which you would like fuller information, or more help till then, there is a very wise and much-loved friend of His, who is willing to come and abide with you until He and you shall meet again.

But begging you to read the letter at your leisure, let us step for a few minutes on board. Let us glance at some of those costly gifts which the Saviour purchased long ago, and which, in this Book of Heaven, He sends to our Island-Planet, and to the several abodes of us sinners who inhabit it.

And, first of all, look at this fine GOLD. Amongst material substances this is the one most prized. Not only is it very beautiful, but it is the means of procuring each rare commodity. Hence, we call him a rich man who abounds in it, and him a poor man who has got none of it. And in the spiritual domain, the equivalent of gold is goodness. By holy beings, and by God himself, the thing most prized is not money, but moral worth; not gold, but goodness. And when God first ushered on existence His new creature, Man, He gave him a portion of Heaven's capital to begin with; He gave him holy tastes and dispositions, a pure and pious mind. But man soon lost it. He suffered himself to be defrauded of his original righteousness; and on that dismal day, he who rose the heir of immortality, lay down a bankrupt and a pauper. All was lost; and though he tried to replace it by a glittering counterfeit, the substitute had not one atom of what is essential to genuine goodness. It entirely lacked THE LOVE OF GOD; and no sooner had Jehovah applied the touchstone, than in grief and displeasure He exclaimed,

"How is the gold become dim!—how is the most fine gold changed!" And yet that gold was essential—nothing could compensate for it. If no merit, then no reward: if no righteousness, no heaven. And man had lost the only thing which entitled him to the favour of God—the only thing which guaranteed a glorious immortality. It was then that his case was undertaken by a Kinsman Redeemer. To a holy humanity He superadded the wisdom and strength of Deity; and divinely authorized, He took the field—the surety and representative of ruined man. In His heart He hid the holy law, and in His sublime fulfilment of it, He magnified that law and made it honourable. And betwixt the precious blood He shed, as an expiation for sin, and the spotless obedience which He offered on behalf of His people, He wrought out a redundant and everlasting righteousness. It was tested, and was found to be without one particle of alloy. It was put into the balance, but the sin has never yet been found which could outweigh the merits of Immanuel. The righteousness of Christ, as the sinner's representative, is the most golden thing in all the Gospel; and it is because of its conveying and revealing that righteousness, that the gospel is the power of God and the wisdom of God unto salvation.[1] Be counselled to buy this fine gold, and you will be rich.[2] Accept, poor sinner, this righteousness of the Saviour, and you will be justified freely by a gracious God, through the redemption that is in Christ.[3] God will be well pleased with you because you are well pleased with His beloved Son; and will count you righteous for the sake of that righteousness

[1] Rom. i. 16, 17. [2] Rev. iii. 18. [3] Rom. iii. 20-26.

which the Saviour wrought out, and which the Gospel reveals, and which, thankfully receiving, you present to a righteous God as your plea for pardon and your passport to the kingdom of heaven.

This is the glory of the Gospel. IT REVEALS A RIGHTEOUSNESS. And, just as the man whose affairs are all entangled would be thankful for money sufficient to discharge his debts, and set him on a footing with his honest neighbours; so the man who knows himself a debtor to Divine justice would be unspeakably thankful for that possession, whatever it may be, which should cancel all his liabilities, and place him on a level with those happy beings who have never sinned at all. This possession is an adequate righteousness; and if the reader be anxious to enjoy God's favour, he will hail the gospel, for it reveals that righteousness.

In other days, when men were in want of money, they sometimes tried to manufacture gold. The alchemist gleaned a portion of every possible substance from ocean, earth, and air, and put them all into his crucible, and then subjected the medley to the most tedious and expensive processes. And after days or months of watching, the poor man was rewarded by seeing a few grains of shining metal, and in the excitement of near discovery, the sweat stood upon his brow, and he urged the fire afresh, and muttered, with trembling diligence, the spell which was to evoke the mystery. And thus, day by day, and year by year, with hungry face and blinking eyes, he gazed into his fining-pot, and stirred the molten rubbish, till one morning the neighbours came and found the fire

extinct, and the ashes blown about, and the old alchemist stiff and dead on the laboratory floor; and when they looked into the broken crucible, they saw that after all his pains, the base metals remained as base as ever.

But though men no longer endeavour to manufacture gold, they still try to manufacture goodness. The merit which is to open heaven, the moral excellence which is to render God propitious, the fine gold of righteousness, they fancy that they can themselves elaborate. As he passed along, the Apostle Paul sometimes saw these moral alchemists at work; and as he observed them so earnest for salvation—as he saw them casting into the crucible prayers, and alms, and tears, and fastings, and self-tortures, he was moved with pity. He told them that depraved humanity was material too base to yield the precious thing they wanted. He told them that they were spending their strength for nought; and that the merit which they were so eager to create exists already. He told them that if they would only avail themselves of it, they might obtain, without restriction, the righteousness of a Divine Redeemer. "I pray that you may be saved; I sympathize with your anxiety; I love your earnest zeal, whilst I deplore your deadly error. But ignorant of the righteousness which God has already provided, and going about to establish a righteousness of your own, you are missing the great magazine of merit—the great repository of righteousness—Jesus Christ. You need not scale the heavens to bring righteousness down; you need not dive into the deep in order to fetch it up; you need not watch, and toil, and do penance, in order to

create it: for it exists already there. God has made His own dear Son the sinner's righteousness, and in the gospel, offers Him to all. The gift is nigh thee. It is at thy door; it is in thy hand. Receive it, and be righteous; receive it and rejoice."[1] And so, dear reader, if you are anxious for peace with God, accept God's own gift—the peace-procuring righteousness. Present, as your only plea with a holy God, the atonement of His Son; despair of bringing merit out of vileness, or sanctity out of sin. With Luther, "Learn to know Christ crucified; learn to sing a new song. Renouncing your own work, cry to Him, Lord, Thou art my righteousness, and I am Thy sin. Thou hast taken on Thee what was mine, and given to me what was Thine; what Thou wast not, Thou becamest, that I might become what I was not."

But among the other precious commodities purchased by the Friend of Sinners, and floated to our world in that comprehensive ark, His gospel, we must notice A PEACEFUL CONSCIENCE and A CONTENTED MIND. Should this be read by any one who has lately committed a crime, or by one who has newly discovered the holiness of God and the plague of his own heart; that reader knows the horrors of a troubled conscience. And no man can make it happy. We might put it in a palace. We might promote it to tread ankle-deep on obsequious carpets, or embosom it in balm and down. We might bid Araby breathe over it, and Golconda glitter round it. We might encircle it with clouds of hovering satellites, and put upon its head the wishing cap of endless wealth. But, if we have not taken

[1] Rom. x. 1-12; 1 Cor. i. 30; 2 Cor. v. 21.

the barb from its memory, the festered wound from the spirit,—the pale foreboding, the frequent gloom, the startled slumber will pronounce these splendours mockery and all this luxury a glittering lie.

And even where there is not this sharp anguish, there is in the worldling's spirit a secret wretchedness, and a prevailing discontent. He longs for something, he scarce knows what; and this dim craving degenerates to a depraved voracity. He feeds on husks and ashes, or even poisonous fruits. He tries to feast his soul with fame and glory, or satiates it with sensual joys and voluptuous revelries. But from the visionary banquet he wakens up, and still his soul hath appetite; or recovered from the drunken orgy he recognises in his besotted self a fiend imprisoned, his guilty soul the demon, and his embruted frame the dungeon. And be the diversion what it may, nothing will make a godless spirit truly happy. Get an unexpected fortune, and rise to sudden grandeur; lounge away your mornings in sumptuous club-rooms, and flutter out your evenings at balls, and plays, and operas; roam through continental vineyards or over northern moors; dawdle the long day in Brighton news-rooms or trip it on Ramsgate Pier; gallop over Ascot, or yacht it round the Needles; and from each famed resort and costly recreation, the lover of pleasure must still bring back a hollow heart and a hungry soul.

But tarry where you are—continue in your present toilsome calling; and pray that prayer, "There be many that say, Who will show us any good? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us, and put gladness in

our heart, more than when corn and wine increase." Learn, that for Christ's sake, God is reconciled to you, and life will wear another aspect. You will be like the primitive believers, after they received the remission of their sins. You will eat your meat with gladness, praising God. The same fir table is still your daily board, and from a homely trencher you still despatch your frugal meal. Work is still wearing, and winters are still severe, and still there will come hard times and heavy trials. But with heavenly entertainment at each repast, and a Divine assurance deep in all your soul; in covenant with the beasts of the earth, and in league with the stones of the field, you will pass, a cheerful pilgrim, through a smiling universe, and enjoy on earth your first of heaven.

And if you ask, which package in the freight,—which passage in the book contains this priceless blessing? there are many which only need to be opened in order to obtain it. "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." "God is in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now, then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you, in Christ's stead, Be ye reconciled to God: for he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." "This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life"

"There is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus."[1] Here is the amnesty, and you, my dear reader, are invited to accept it. So far as you are concerned, nothing lies nearer the heart of Jehovah than your return to His fatherly bosom; and for this very purpose He has sent you the conditions of peace. These conditions have already been fulfilled by His own dear Son as the sinner's Representative, and to His great signature you have only to add your consenting name. And no sooner do you thus fall in with God's way of saving sinners, than His beaming eye pronounces over you the benison which on earth Jesus so rejoiced to utter, "Go in peace: thy sins, which are many, be forgiven thee."

Nor must we forget that possession, as precious as it is unique, THE NEW HEART. "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and will cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them." Whenever a man believes the Gospel, God gives him a loving, trustful, and obedient heart; and what was formerly irksome or odious becomes to his altered views and feelings attractive and easy. The Lord not only delivers him from the slavery of sin, and transfers him into His own family, but gives him the cordial feelings and affectionate instincts of a son. And along with this, everything is changed. The great commandment, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy soul," is no longer a flagrant extravagance

[1] Isa. i. 18; 2 Cor. v. 19-21; 1 John v. 11, 12; Rom. viii. 1.

but a gracious privilege, and the thankful spirit answers, "O Lord, Thou art the strength of my heart and my portion for ever." Prayer is no longer an infliction but an opportunity, and the sanctuary, from a prison or lock-up, is transformed into a happy homestead and endeared resort; whilst the Sabbath, once so dull or so dissipated, smiles upon him in hallowed and delightful returns. His relation to the Saviour gives a new look to the holy law; and, receiving from the hand of a pardoning God those requirements which he used to receive from a threatening Judge, the duties which frowned with prohibition and coerced by penalties, become propitious and inviting. The prickly precept—"The soul that sinneth, it shall die,"—the Saviour has deprived of its thorn, and along with Sharon's rose, and blending their fragrance together, He gives it to each disciple, that he may wear it in his bosom. And the harsh and hispid law—the command, which, like the loaf still latent in the bearded corn, is insipid and repulsive in the shape of dry morality—He has relieved from its choking awns and encumbering chaff; and, sweetened with beatitude, it tastes like sacramental bread, whilst He Himself says over it, "Eat, O friend; yea, feast abundantly, O beloved:" And as it was to his Elder Brother, it becomes to the adopted child of God like meat and drink, to do the will of his Father who is in heaven.

But over and above its golden treasures and rich commodities, this vessel brings some RARE EXOTICS. Perfect only in that better land, there is a skilful Cultivator,[1] who even in these cold climes has cherished and carried

[1] Gal. v. 22; John xv. 26.

through some glorious specimens. With snowy petals, and drenching all around in contagious sweetness, blooms that lily of our valley, Christian Love; and beside it, with ruby blossom, courting all the radiant firmament, holy Joy may be recognised. By its silken stem and subtle branchlets, hiding its florets from blustery weather in a pavilion of its own, Peace may be identified; whilst, near it, Long-suffering strikes its bleeding fibres deeper, and with balm requites the hand that wounds it. As if from one source springing, Gentleness and Kindness twine together, whilst Faith, erect and Heaven-pointing, bears them each aloft. Scarce opening its modest eye, but bewraying its presence in the scented air, Meekness nestles in the mossy turf; and Temperance reveals in its healthy hue the tonic hidden in its root. These flowers of Paradise are sent to grace the Christian and cheer his friends; and it matters not whether they adorn the pent-up attic or the rural mansion: the spiritual mind is their true conservatory. Man's first home was a garden, and he seems to retain the love of those gentle shapes and glorious tints which were his silent comrades in Eden; and wandering through the sultry streets on days like these, it moves a pensive smile to see in many a window the dusty shrub or the empty flower-pot,—a memento of scenes which can never be revisited, and a protest for rural joys which must not be tasted again. But those exotics which we have just enumerated, are independent of atmosphere and latitude; and some of the most splendid specimens have been cherished in workshops and cellars, amidst the dust of factories, the smoke of cities,

and in the depths of airless mines. "Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance,"—these are the brightest beauties and the most fragrant ornaments of any dwelling. Pray that the Spirit of God would transfer them from the Bible to your character, and that He would tend and water them there. For should these graces flourish, the frost upon the fields and the snow-flakes on the gale will never touch the fadeless summer of your soul.

And, to notice nothing more, we must mention, as included in this costly consignment, THE TITLE-DEEDS TO A GREAT INHERITANCE. Before He left the world, the Lord Jesus said to His disciples, "In my Father's house are many mansions. I go to prepare a place for you." And the Bible gives us some hints, that we may know what sort of mansion it is. Sin and sorrow never enter it. Its inhabitant never says, I am sick. And from his eyes God has wiped all tears. No tempting devil and no corrupting men come near it; but all is holy, and all is pure. Its sun never sets, for a present Saviour is its constant light; and its blessedness never ebbs, for God himself is the fountain of its joy. And there the redeemed of earth have for their company the mighty intellects and loving souls in glory. And all this the Saviour has purchased for His people; and all this, happy reader, will be yours if you belong to Jesus. Like the expiring negro, when a friend exclaimed, "Poor Pompey!" and he answered, "Me no poor any more; me King Pompey now:" I dare say that you are poor, but I am sure that you are rich. You are going where your present rank will be no objection,

and where your earthly privations will only make the transition more ecstatic. And oh, my friend! look forward and look up! I wish I could add to your present comforts; but I know that, if you had it, this blessed hope would often cheat your present miseries. One windy afternoon I went with a friend into a country almshouse. There was sitting before a feeble fire a very aged man, and the better to keep from his bald head the cold gusts, he wore his hat: he was never likely to need it out of doors. He was very deaf, and so shaken with the palsy, that one wooden shoe constantly pattered on the brick floor. But deaf, and sick, and helpless, it turned out that he was happy. "What are you doing, Wisby?" said my friend. "Waiting, sir." "And for what?" "For the appearing of my Lord." "And what makes you wish for His appearing?" "Because, sir, I expect great things then. He has promised a crown of righteousness to all that love His appearing." And to see whether it was a right foundation on which he rested that glorious hope, we asked old Wisby what it was. By degrees he got on his spectacles, and opening the great Bible beside him, pointed to that text, "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God."[1] And, dear reader, the God of grace puts that blessedness within your offer. Embrace it, and you will be the happy man "to whom death is welcome, whilst life is sweet."

[1] Rom. v. 1, 2.

"When I can read my title clear
To mansions in the skies,
I bid farewell to every fear,
And wipe my weeping eyes."

And now, kind reader, have you understood these things? Over a few sentences of this address, I have cast a thin veil of metaphor; but I shall be very sorry if it has obscured my meaning; for even in these humble pages, there are truths which, if you believe and embrace, you need envy no man's millions, and many a wealthy worldling is poor compared with you.

The thing which I have been most anxious to show, is the kind tone in which the Saviour speaks to you, and the boons which, in the Bible, He transmits to you. Judging by the way some people speak, you might fancy that the Bible is a severe and angry book, or, at the very best, that it is a book of good advices. This is a mistake. The Bible has many a solemn passage, and it abounds in good advices; but you miss the very best of it if you think that this is all. I shall suppose that a young man has left his home in Scotland or the north of England. He comes to this great London, and in a little while falls in with its worst ways. In the theatre, tea-garden, or tavern-parlour, spending all his money, he gets deep in debt; and then he turns ill, and is taken to the hospital. And when there he begins to bethink him of his foolishness: "I wish I once were well again. I wish I once were home again. But 'tis no use wishing. I know that my father's door is shut. They would not take me in. And if once I were able to creep about, they would have

me up for debt. It would just be out of the hospital into the jail." And, whilst bemoaning his misery, a letter comes from his father, telling him that he has heard of his wretched plight, and reminding him of the past, and all he had done for his wayward child—and glancing his eye over it, the sick youth crumples it up, and crams it away under his pillow. And by and by a comrade comes in, and among other things the invalid tells him, " And here is a letter of good advice just come from my father," —and that other runs his eye over it, " Good advice, did you say ? I think you should rather have said, good news. Don't you see, he makes you welcome home again ? and in order that you may settle your accounts, and return in peace and comfort, he has appended this draft for twenty pounds." Most people read the Bible carelessly, or with a guilty conscience for the interpreter, and they notice in it nothing but reproofs and good advice. They miss the main thing there. The Gospel is good news. It tells us that God is Love, and it announces to every reader that the door of the Father's house is open, and that this very night he may find a blessed home in the bosom of his God. And as we have all incurred a debt to Divine justice, which throughout eternity we never could pay ; and as it needs a righteousness to recommend us to the favour of a holy God—in every Bible there is enclosed a draft on the Saviour's merits, to which the sinner has only to sign his consenting name, and the great salvation is his own. By exhibiting the cross of Christ,—by directing to that precious blood which cleanses from all sin, and by presenting a perfect righteousness, to every awakened

conscience the Bible comes a benefactor and a friend in need. And when rightly understood, the angelic anthem, —"Glory to God in the highest; on earth peace; good-will toward men,"—is the cheerful but stately tune to which the Gospel goes, and to which in heaven itself they sing it.

And, reader, try to catch that tune. Pray that God would this very night by His own Spirit teach it to you. Fear not to believe too soon, nor to rejoice in Christ Jesus too much. Let the love of God your Saviour tide into all your soul, and, as it makes your feelings happy, so will it make your dispositions new. Peace and joy will keep you from some sins, gratitude and loyalty will preserve you from the rest. No cheerful glass will be needed to raise your spirits then; for a soul exulting in the great salvation forgets its poverty, and remembers its misery no more. No sinful lust nor forbidden joy will enthral you then; for you will have discovered deeper and purer pleasures. And there will be no fear of your growling and cursing through your daily task, or filling with consternation your cowering family; for the peace of God will make you pacific, and, scattering on every side kind looks and friendly feelings, you will come and go a sunshine in the shop, a joyful presence in the home.

No: do not sit so sullenly. I am a stranger, but it is the truth of God I tell. In all your life you may never have got a costly gift; but here, at last, is one. It is the gift of God, and therefore it is a gift unspeakable; but, accepted as cordially as it is graciously offered, it will make you blessed now and rich for all eternity. Oh, my

dear friend, do not eye it so coldly; suffer it not so tamely to pass away. This night has brought you good news. It has told you of the Saviour's costly purchase and wondrous present. Let it also bring good news to heaven; let it tell that the love of God has broken your heart, and made you sorry and ashamed for all your sins; let it tell that with tears of thankfulness you have surveyed the "unsearchable riches of Christ," and have given yourself to Him who once gave Himself for you; let it tell that your history has taken a new turn, and that, breaking off from your worthless companions and evil ways, you have begun in lowliness and love to follow Jesus.

III.

A BUNCH IN THE HAND, AND MORE ON THE BUSH.

Not far from London there dwelt an old couple. In early life they had been poor; but the husband became a Christian, and God blessed their industry, and they were living in a comfortable retirement, when one day a stranger called on them to ask their subscription to a charity. The old lady had not so much grace as her husband, and still hankered after some of the Sabbath earnings and easy shillings which Thomas had forfeited from regard to the law of God. And so when the visitor asked their contribution, she interposed and said, "Why, sir, we have lost a deal by religion since we first began: my husband knows that very well. Have we not, Thomas?" And after a solemn pause Thomas answered, "Yes, Mary, we have. I have lost a deal by my religion. Before I had got religion, Mary, I had got a water-pail, in which I used to carry water, and that, you know, I have lost many years ago; and then I had an old slouched hat, a tattered coat, and mended shoes and stockings: but I have lost them also long ago. And, Mary, you know, that poor as I was, I had a habit of getting drunk and quarrelling with you; and that, you know, I have lost. And then I had a burdened

conscience and a wicked heart, and ten thousand guilty fears; but all are lost, completely lost, and, like a mill-stone, cast into the deepest sea. And, Mary, you have been a loser too, though not so great a loser as myself. Before we got religion, Mary, you had got a washing-tray in which you washed for hire; but since we got religion, you have lost your washing-tray. And you had a gown and a bonnet much the worse for wear, though they were all you had to wear; but you have lost them long ago. And you had many an aching heart concerning me at times; but these you happily have lost. And I could even wish that you had lost as much as I have lost; for what we lose by our religion will be our everlasting gain."

There are instances where religion has required a sacrifice; but so far as our own observation goes, it has blessed its possessors, not only by what it imparted, but also by what it took away. Their chief losses may be comprised in the following items—

A bad character;
A guilty conscience;
A troublesome temper;
Sundry evil habits,
And all their wicked companions.

And then, on the other side, over and above all the higher benefits which the Gospel bestows, and which, in our last paper, we tried to enumerate, its advent into the poor man's home is usually signalized by some immediate and obvious blessings. We allow that they are secondary, but they are not insignificant. Let us glance at some of

them. Like the bunch which the spies fetched from Eshcol, they may give some notion of the goodly land; but they are only a sample, and the true wisdom is to go up and possess the region itself, and then you will gather the grapes where they grow, and when one cluster is finished, you will find still better on the tree.

1. Religion is FORETHOUGHT and FRUGALITY. The disciple of Jesus is well-off—his fortune is made, and he does not need to set his heart on filthy lucre. But then he is high-hearted—he is of his Master's mind, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." He would rather be an almoner than a pensioner; and he is anxious to lay a good foundation for age as well as for infirmity. And he "provides for his own house." He would fain contribute to the commonwealth one independent and self-sustaining family. And the foresight and self-denial which he has learned at the feet of Jesus, put these achievements in his power. You may see the thing in living specimens. Take, for instance, these shopmates, Sam Solder and Tom Thwackwell. Perhaps you know them; at all events, in their employment as tinsmiths, they have made some noise in the world. Once of a sudden Sam took it into his head to marry; and as he had a few shillings to pay the fees, he made it out; but before the honeymoon was ended, the bride had to pawn her wedding-gown to buy next Sunday's dinner. Tom also fell in love; but his sweetheart and he agreed that they would wait till they had made up twenty pounds betwixt them. Last Saturday Sam did not take home his wages till after midnight, and then he did not take the whole; and next

morning his wife went out and bought some stale meat and withered greens, and paid the Sunday trader ten per cent. more than they would have cost in the Saturda market. Sometimes, however, Sam brings home nothing at all; and in order to procure a steak, they had once to sell their frying-pan. But now that at last he has married his notable little wife, Tom hies home as fast as he can on Saturday evening, sure that the earnings of last week have made the marketings of this one, and that he will find the room so tidy and the tea-things set out, and that afterwards they will have a turn in the park, or, should it chance to rain, an hour for reading some useful book. At an immemorial period his shopmate "fell behind;" that is, in a certain race the consumer of pies and porter outran the producer of water-pails and metallic chimney-pots; and the shillings which he got from his employer could not keep up with the half-crowns which he spent on himself. And ever since the luckless day when the Spender distanced the Winner, it has been a perpetual scramble. For want of ready cash—and credit they never had—his hungry household subsists on accidental and precarious meals; and bought in paltry shops, and in the smallest quantities, their greatest bargain is a stinted pennyworth. In his Bible Thomas read, "Owe no man anything;" and, in order to make sure, he thought it best to have always something to spare. At the very outset he bade the Winner "march," whilst he held the Spender by the heel, and would not let him stir a single step till the other was far ahead. And now he begins to find the advantage of this early self-denial. From having a little money at com-

mand, he has never on an emergency required to borrow at a ruinous usury, and he has been able to pick up at a trifling cost a clock and a bookcase, and a chest of drawers, when they happened to be going cheap. And he has discovered that sovereigns are, in their habits, somewhat gregarious; if, like rats, they run away from a tottering house, like storks and starlings they are ready to come and colonize wherever one of their species reports a kind reception. And accordingly, with little exertion, without pinching and scraping, or any shabby expedients, he finds the little store quietly increasing. And now it is whispered in the street, that he intends to purchase the house in which he has been heretofore a lodger; whilst during the year his neighbour has effected three removals. And curious observers have noted that each of these removals is less arduous than its predecessor; and it is likely that the next may cost nothing, as at the present rate they will then be able to carry on their backs all their remaining goods and chattels.

In providing for one's own house, perhaps the best plan is mutual insurance. In many provident societies the premiums have been calculated too low; but in some recently established, such as the "Christian Mutual Provident Society," a scale of payments has been adopted which effectually secures against all risk. I shall suppose that the reader is a healthy man, and twenty-five years of age. Would he like to secure ten shillings a week, during every term of sickness, for the next forty years? He may secure it by paying 1s. 4½d. a month, or a halfpenny every day. Or would he like to retire from hard

work at the end of these forty years? By paying 2s. 3d. monthly, or less than a penny daily, he may buy against that period a pension of 6s. weekly. Or would he prefer leaving to his survivors, at whatever time it may please God to call him away, a sum of solid money? For such a purpose he may secure £100 by paying 3s. 5d. a month, or £2 a year. Or, if he dislikes insurance, he may try the Savings Bank, and there the daily penny would mount up to £50 in thirty years.

But how is a working man to manage this? How is he to spare the daily penny from his scanty earnings? I fear some cannot; but I know that many can. Do you smoke, or snuff, or chew tobacco? Then please to count how much this costs you in a week, and how much in the fifty-two weeks which make a year. And how much do you allow for stimulating liquor? A friend reminds me that a moderate pint of beer comes to £3 per annum, or £30 in ten years. And how do you dispose of your loose halfpence? And how much do you spend on Sunday excursions, and fairs, and treats, and merry-makings? Not very much on any one occasion, but enough from time to time to make at last a fortune. For it is not by surprising windfalls, but by systematic savings—by the resolute repetition of Jane Taylor's golden maxim, "I can do without it," that men have made the most solid fortunes, the fullest of satisfaction to the founder, and the most enduring. And were you only commencing now to save up the coppers which you have hitherto squandered at the pastry-cook's or the fruiterer's stall, and the sixpences you would have melted in beer or burned in

tobacco, they will soon swell up into a pound; and by perseverance and the blessing of God that pound may grow to a competency.[1]

2. Religion insures SOBRIETY. Is it not fearful that Britain spends on intoxicating liquors fifty millions every year? We often complain of our high taxation, and sometimes grow nervous at the national debt. But here is a tax for which we cannot blame our rulers; a tax self-imposed and self-levied; a tax for which we can only blame ourselves; a tax which would pay the interest of our national debt twice over; and a tax as large as the entire revenue of these United Kingdoms. We thought it a great sum to pay in order to give the slave his freedom; we thought the twenty millions given to the West India proprietors a mighty sacrifice; and certainly it was the noblest tribute any nation ever paid to the cause of philanthropy: but large as it looks, half a year of national abstinence would have paid it all. But tremendous as are the fifty millions which as a people we yearly engulf in strong drink, the thought which afflicts and appals us is,

[1] We would cordially recommend to our readers, on this and kindred subjects, Chambers's Penny Tract, No. 170, *Hints to Workmen*. After the above paragraphs were written, a friend in the west of England was kind enough to show us over his factory. It abounded in contrivances and processes which we had never seen before; but the sight which interested us beyond all these was a picture-gallery of industrious veterans. In his counting-room the warm-hearted proprietor had suspended, large as life, the portraits of five faithful servants, who had each spent about half a century in these works. I need not say that they had all been sober men. It was a rule of the establishment, that no one employed at it should ever enter a public-house. But most of these venerable worthies had been pious men; and, pointing to one of the likenesses, my friend mentioned, "That old man was worth fifteen hundred pounds when he died." He was a common worker with ordinary wages; but he realized enough to provide a comfortable independence for two nieces who survive him.

that this terrible impost is mainly a tax on the working man. The lamentation is that many an industrious man will spend in liquor as much money as, had he saved it, would this year have furnished a room, and next year would have bought a beautiful library; as much money as would secure a splendid education for every child, or in the course of a few years would have made him a landlord instead of a tenant. Why, my friends, it would set our blood a-boiling if we heard that the Czar or the Sultan taxed his subjects in the style that our British workmen tax themselves. It would bring the days of Wat Tyler back again, nay, it would create another Hampden, and conjure up a second Cromwell, did the Exchequer try to raise the impost which our publicans levy, and our labourers and artisans cheerfully pay. But is it not a fearful infatuation? Is it not our national madness to spend so much wealth in shattering our nerves, and exploding our characters, and ruining our souls? Many workmen, I rejoice to know, have been reclaimed by Teetotalism, and many have been preserved by timely religion. In whatever way a man is saved from that horrible vice, which is at once the destruction of the body and the damnation of the soul, "therein I do rejoice, and will rejoice." Only you cannot be a Christian without being also a sober man, and the more of God's grace you get, the easier will you find it to vanquish this most terrible of the working man's temptations.

3. Religion creates HONESTY, CIVILITY, PUNCTUALITY, INDUSTRY, and those other qualities which secure for the working man popularity and promotion. And whatever

theorists may propound to the contrary, this is the way in which God himself has arranged society. The steady and sober are to rise and be respected, whilst the dissolute and disorderly must sink and disappear. And though there is in many quarters a prejudice against piety; though some infidel and irreligious employers prefer workmen with easy principles and pliant consciences, no business can long prosper without probity, and no employer can become permanently rich with ruffians or rogues for his servants. Hence in all extensive and protracted undertakings, principle will undoubtedly win for itself an eventual preference; and the workman who understands his trade and keeps his character may expect to retain his place. The King of Babylon had no liking to Daniel's religion; but then Daniel was the only man who could manage the hundred provinces. And the King of Egypt would have preferred Joseph's finance and Joseph's forethought without Joseph's piety; but as he could not get the one without the other, he put up with the Hebrew's faith for the sake of the statesman's policy. And in the same way, if you carry Bible rules into your conduct, the Lord himself will undertake your case, and people will find out that it is good to have the like of you around them. If you will not work on Sunday, neither will you be tipsy or absent on Monday. If you won't tell a falsehood for your employer, neither will you waste his materials nor pilfer his property. And if you are not a sycophant in the slackest times, you will not be saucy in the busiest; but seeking first to please your Master in Heaven, you will find yourself rewarded with the good-will and confidence of your superiors on earth

Richard Williams attended the Horshay Ironworks in Shropshire. From the time that he found the forgiveness of his sins at the foot of the Cross, he became a delightful neighbour and a most diligent workman. He was a Methodist and his master a Quaker, and seeing Richard's conscientiousness, Mr. Reynolds promoted him to be one of his superintendents—an office which he held with growing honour all his life. One secret of Richard's promotion, and one reason why whatsoever he did prospered well, was his prayerfulness. God was his Heavenly Father, and therefore he besought His blessing on his common toils; and I think you will be interested to read the two following letters to a friend :—

"I am much better in health to-day, but am in some difficulty as to our works. We are 'setting on' the other furnace, and it goes off very stubbornly. It requires a deal of care and hard work to get it right; and will require much more, unless a speedy turn takes place in our favour. Continue, therefore, to pray for us. I know your prayers will do more than all we can do with our strong bars and great hammers. Do not, therefore, forget us at the throne of the heavenly grace."

Again—

"We are engaged in difficult work, and are desirous of getting it over before Sabbath. I pray the Lord that we may succeed. The expenses of the works to Mr. Reynolds are at present very great, and the profits none. I am employed all night and a part of the day; but I heartily thank God for His kind care over me, and hope He will preserve us all. Very earnestly do I wish that we may

get it done, that we all may have the Sabbath free from labour for the purposes of religion."

And his love of the Sabbath and his personal consistency were at last rewarded by seeing every furnace stopped on the first day of the week. On a subject so near his heart he ventured a respectful representation to the proprietor—a representation which derived such weight from Richard's worth and modesty, that, notwithstanding the pecuniary hazard, an experiment was permitted:—it proved successful, and these Sabbath-keeping furnaces are a noble monument to a conscientious working man.

The truth is, that God's blessing attends His people in their common calling. If they commit their way to Him, He brings it to pass. He opens doors. He finds for them friends and favour. He smoothes down difficulties, and gives their earnings reproductive value. You have likely heard of Thomas Mann, the London Waterman. Besides large sums given in his life to poor acquaintances, he left to different societies nearly two thousand pounds. And how did he make it? God gave it to him. God gave him great faith in His own Word and promises—a devout and God-fearing mind; and these developed in politeness and honesty, punctuality and diligence. People who once used his boat were so pleased with the owner, that if they could get him again they would hail no other; and, having won a friend, he was so attentive and exact that he never lost him again; and though he never plied on the Sabbath, and never pocketed a shilling beyond the proper fare, and was always giving money away, it seemed as if he could

not grow poor. Always sober, always cheerful, and usually the first on the water, the Lord smiled on his pious industry; and, amidst all his prosperity, the Lord kept him humble and generous, to show us that, if a man has already got heaven in his heart, it is not mere money that will make him a miser.

4. Religion is REFINEMENT. It expands the mind of its possessor, and purifies his taste. It is a great mistake to confound riches and refinement, just as it is a great mistake to fancy that, because a man is poor, he must be coarse and vulgar. Lord Jeffreys, though seated on the highest tribunal in the realm whilst pouring forth his brutal ribaldry, was a vulgar man; and a very vulgar man was Chancellor Thurlow, sporting oaths and obscenity at the table of the Prince of Wales. But there was no vulgarity about James Ferguson, though herding sheep, whilst his eye watched Arcturus and the Pleiades, and his wistful spirit wandered through immensity; and though seated at a stocking-loom, there was no vulgarity in the youth who penned the "Star of Bethlehem;" the weaver-boy, Henry Kirke White, was not a vulgar lad. And so, my respected friends, if you surrender your minds to the teaching of God's Word and Spirit, they will receive the truest, deepest refinement. There may be nothing in your movements to indicate the training of the dancing-school, nor anything in your elocution which speaks of courtly circles or smooth society; but there will be an elevation in your tastes and a purity in your feelings as of men accustomed to the society of the King of kings. You will have a relish for a higher literature than the half-

penny ballad or the Sunday news, and for a more improving intercourse than the tap or the club-room can supply. And though you may not have at easy command the phrases of politeness, the most polished, if they but be the children of God, will have sentiments and language in common with you, and a stronger affinity for you than for the most fine-spoken impiety. And in your respectful demeanour to those above you, and in your kind and civil carriage to those around you, men will see that you have learned your manners from the book which says, "Be courteous," and which supplies the finest model of gentility. The religion which is at last to lift the beggar from the dunghill, and set him with nobles of the earth, will even now give the toiling man the elevated aims, the enlarged capacity, the lofty tastes, and manly bearing, which princes have often lacked; for if vice be the worst vulgarity, religion is the best refinement.

5. Religion secures that priceless possession—A HAPPY HOME. Six things are requisite to create a Home. Integrity must be the Architect, and Tidiness the upholsterer. It must be warmed by Affection, and lighted up with Cheerfulness; and Industry must be the ventilator, renewing the atmosphere, and bringing in fresh salubrity day by day; whilst over all, as a protecting canopy and defending glory, nothing will suffice except the Blessing of God.

Dear reader, if you are in earnest yourself, I hope it is your privilege to have a pious partner. If not, "what knowest thou, O man, but that by prayer and persuasion thou mayest gain thy wife?" and then all will work sweetly; and with the Bible to direct you, and helping

one another, you may condense into your dwelling, however narrow, all the happiness of which this mortal state is susceptible.

In the north of England, and in the days of haunted houses, a certain farm was infested by a mischievous sprite. It skimmed the milk, and soured the cream; it made the haystacks heat, and blasted the cattle into skin and bone; and, besides frightening the maid-servants, and tumbling the children into the pond, it often raised such a riot up among the rafters, that the poor people were brought to their wits' end, and determined on leaving the place. Everything was packed, and the cavalcade was in motion; and they had proceeded so far in their journey when a countryman met the procession, and in amazement demanded, "What's thee doing, neighbour Hodge?" "We are flitting," shouted the farmer gruffly; and from the depths of the waggon a shrill voice echoed, "Yes, WE are flitting;" and, at the same moment, one of the youngsters screamed,—"Oh, father, father, Brownie's in the churn!" and finding that their foe was as ready for the road as themselves, the farmer turned the horse's head, and went back to his old premises with a look of woful resignation. And in the course of our travels we have often encountered a Brownie's flitting. Beneath the shadow of the Drachenfels, on Lochlomond's silvery tide, in the fluttering streets of Paris, and on the bright mountains of Wales, we have many times fallen in with a family party, evidently fleeing from a haunted house. And having devoted some attention to the subject, we find that the mansions of the aristocracy are mainly fre-

quented by two evil spirits, called Indifference and Ennui. They are dull demons, both of them, quite different from the vivacious Brownies of the farm and the village: they raise no racket overhead; but being of phlegmatic mood and courtly habits, they wear satin slippers and glide softly over the polished floor. The one is an incubus which dulls the heart, the other a torpedo which benumbs the brain. Indifference or Nonchalance (for both he and his cousin Ennui are foreigners, and had French names when they first came over)—Indifference takes the zest from friendship, and all the endearment out of closest kindred. If he gets into the breakfast parlour, my lady and my lord have nothing to say to one another, but my lord takes alternate morsels of his muffin and the morning paper, and my lady communes in silence with the sugar-tongs; and if he gets into the nursery, the brothers and sisters there are blighted into little lords and little ladies, with as little love to one another as if they were already old; and if they love papa and mamma, it is because they have learned to connect them with the cake and fruit which endear the moments after dinner. And Ennui is an idle ghost, harbouring under ottomans and fauteuils, fond of a dressing-gown, and delighting in breakfasts at mid-day; and a most irksome ghost—a sort of aërial cuttle, shedding inky gloom into the atmosphere, and blackening the brightest skies; a moral Remora,[1] frus-

[1] The press-corrector has put a query at this word; and perhaps the reader will do the same. The Remora was a fish which, in the time of Pliny, could stop a ship in full sail. But as it is no longer known to seamen, we suspect, as hinted above, that it has exchanged the stormy deep for our modern drawing-rooms.

trating existence, and leaving clever and accomplished people without an object and without an effort, becalmed on a sofa, spell-bound on a silken sea.

> "Day after day, day after day,
> They stick, nor breath nor motion;
> As idle as a painted ship
> Upon a painted ocean."

And it is to escape from these afflictive inmates that the travelling-carriage is ordered to the door, and the rumble put on. But all in vain. The Brownies have bespoken their seats. The one perks his long visage betwixt my lord and my lady, and the other mounts the box with the heir-apparent. The country is deplorably "stupid;" and as the day wears on, the travellers discover many omissions and "tiresome" mistakes, which are so far a relief as entitling them to be cross at one another; and when the sumptuous hotel is attained, and the costly dinner despatched, a sullen sprite guides each to his chamber, and laughs as they labour to sleep—

> "For vainly Betty performs her part,
> If a ruffled head and a rumpled heart,
> As well as the couch, want making."

And we are sorry to add that many a cottage is haunted. The circumstance which first called our attention to the fact, was finding that so few working people are keepers at home. In the evenings, we found them at penny theatres, and at "judge and jury" trials, smoking beside the alehouse fire, or lounging over a tankard at the door of some country tavern. And we were sorry to see them. We regretted that they should be so selfish. We grieved

that they should indulge in enjoyments which their wives and children could not share. But going to their houses, we found a reason. We found that many of these husbands and fathers were driven from their homes by evil spirits. The truth is, that the abode of many an industrious man is rendered miserable by two notorious goblins, and they are none the better for being native Saxons. Tawdriness is a sluttish fairy, rejoicing in dirt and disorder: her sandals are down in the heels, the better to display the gap in the stocking-sole; and a tuft of ragged hair asserts its freedom through a corresponding rent in the frouzy cap. In matters of *vertu*,—in pottery and furniture,—her taste is for torsos and fractured specimens, chairs without bottoms, and grates without bars; and therefore she breaks the spouts of the pitchers, and burns the nozzle of the bellows and the brush of the hearth-broom. And in the picturesque, her liking is for new combinations and striking contrasts; a blazing ribbon and a smutty face; a feed to-day and a fast to-morrow. On one end of her geographical tea-table, untouched since the morning, England is represented in crumbs of bread, and alongside, the Sister Isle is symbolized in potato-parings; and at another corner, an Arve of muddy ale mingles with a Rhone of reluctant sky-blue. The kindred elf is Turmoil. Her talent lies in creating discord; and betwixt the slamming of the door, and the clashing of the fire-irons, and the squalling of turbulent children, it is not surprising that she sometimes scares away to other scenes the distracted "goodman of the house." The two together are more than a match for any man; and we

cannot wonder at the strange asylums which people seek whose homes are thus haunted by dirtiness and din.

But all these foes of the house disappear when piety takes possession. We could rejoice to tell the scenes which may be witnessed in some of England's stately halls, where the genius of the place is an ascendant Gospel, and where, from his presence, listlessness and languor have fled away. Because we think you would like to look at them, we would gladly sketch some of those bright moral spectacles, where, surrounded by the beauties of nature and the amenities of art, families of high degree dwell lovingly together, and occupy their hours in intellectual improvement and in devices for doing good to those around them; where wealth gives practical expression to philanthropy, and where the morning and evening sacrifice derive, not virtue, but impressiveness from their position who present it. But we must indulge in no more digression. We must hasten to tell our industrious readers how real religion would make their homes bright and happy.

And, for one thing, it would make them neat and tidy. The mind of an ungodly man is all confusion. Whims and fancies, lusts and passions, come and go; and there being no pervasive principle, no holy controlling power, no master of the house, that mind becomes a perfect chaos—a cage of disorder and impurity. And that mind manifests itself. It is very apt to transfer its own image to the abode in which it dwells, and make this also a den of filth and confusion. But as soon as that mind surrenders to the Spirit of God, and is possessed by this

Heavenly Inmate, a mighty change comes over it. He shuts the door against vile thoughts and villanous notions; and refractory passions he quells beneath his firm but gentle sway. And he creates a liking for what is pure, honest, lovely, and of good report. And that inward change tells outwardly—the renewed mind shows itself. It sets the house in order; it finds a place for everything, and keeps everything in its place; and though it may not afford costly raiment or fine furniture, it shows its good taste in the homeliest attire and the humblest dwelling.

And just as it purifies the house, so religion pacifies the household. A great calm inwardly, it sheds a tranquillizing influence on every side. It fills the hearts which hold it with love to one another, and to happy yoke-fellows it gives a truer and more tender understanding than ever sprang from sentimental fondness.

The man of prayer is always a man of power. His very presence is encircled by a serene ascendency, and his children and all around him feel it. His own happiness reminds him that there is a time to laugh, and a time to play; and instead of fretting at childish glee, he can heartily promote it. Or if it be time to forbear, his friendly "Hush!" creates an instant and cheerful calm. The man of prayer carries with him something of that secret majesty which is only gotten at the Mercy-seat; and whilst he is not seeking to bend all things to his imperious wishes, he finds his wishes forestalled, and his desires fulfilled by prompt affection, or, better still, by a kind and all-controlling Power. And, hastening from his daily toil, he knows what he may expect within—smiles

and caresses, and schoolroom news, loud shouts and silent love—shouts which tell that the father is not formidable, and silent love, which cannot tell how dear the husband is, but both together telling to his inmost heart the loving-kindness of the Lord.

Reader, your happiness will be our reward. In this paper we have tried to show that, even within the limits of the present life, there is great gain in contented godliness. Will you not try it? Will you not be persuaded to that wise experiment which thousands have made, but never one regretted?

Think over what we have written. Read it to your wife. Ask her what she thinks; and should you both agree that your present course is not the best, and that it might be mended, begin at once the more excellent way.

Pray to God that for Jesus' sake he would give you the teaching of His Holy Spirit. You have many things to learn; many bad habits to give up, and many good ones to begin. You can do nothing of yourselves; but may the Lord make you able and willing in His day of power!

For the past seek pardon in a Saviour's blood. If urged in the Mediator's name, God will not despise the prayer. "Wash me from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me."

And for the future, resolve, in the strength of the Lord, on a course of conduct entirely new. Say with the Psalmist, "I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way; I will walk within my house with a perfect heart. A

froward heart shall depart from me; I will not know a wicked person."

And to show that you are sincere—to prevent your present purposes from melting like the vanished goodness of other days, take action. This evening set up God's worship in your family. Next Lord's day carry your household to some Christian sanctuary, and commence a course of constant attendance on the means of grace. Break instantly with any bad companions, and if there be anything on which you covet further light, consult some Christian minister or pious friend. And may the Lord bless you, and keep you, and cause His countenance to shine upon you.

"O God of Bethel! by whose hand
Thy people still are fed,
Who through this weary pilgrimage
Hast all our fathers led:

Through each perplexing path of life
Our wandering footsteps guide;
Give us each day our daily bread,
And raiment fit provide.

O spread thy covering wings around,
Till all our wanderings cease,
And at our Father's loved abode
Our souls arrive in peace."

IV.

THE OASIS.

THE Sabbath is God's gracious present to a working world; and for wearied minds and bodies it is the grand restorative. The Creator has given us a natural restorative—sleep; and a moral restorative—Sabbath-keeping; and it is ruin to dispense with either. Under the pressure of high excitement, individuals have passed weeks together with little sleep, or none; but when the process is long-continued, the over-driven powers rebel, and fever, delirium, and death come on. Nor can the natural amount be regularly curtailed without corresponding mischief. The Sabbath does not arrive like sleep. The day of rest does not steal over us like the hour of slumber. It does not entrance us whether we will or not; but addressing us as intelligent beings, our Creator assures us that we need it, and bids us notice its return, and court its renovation. And if, rushing in the face of our Creator's kindness, we force ourselves to work all days alike, it is not long till we pay the forfeit. The mental worker—the man of business or the man of letters—finds his ideas coming turbid and slow; the equipoise of his faculties is upset; he grows moody, fitful, and capricious; and with his

mental elasticity broken, should any disaster occur, he subsides into habitual melancholy, or in self-destruction speeds his guilty exit from a gloomy world. And the manual worker—the artisan, the engineer—fagging on from day to day and week to week, the bright intuition of his eye gets blunted, and, forgettul of their cunning, his fingers no longer perform their feats of twinkling agility, nor, by a plastic and tuneful touch, mould dead matter, or wield mechanic power; but, mingling his life's blood in his daily drudgery, his locks are prematurely grey, his genial humour sours, and, slaving it till he has become a morose or reckless man, for any extra effort, or any blink of balmy feeling, he must stand indebted to opium or alcohol. To an industrious population so essential is the periodic rest, that when, in France, the attempt was made to abolish the weekly Sabbath, it was found necessary to issue a decree, suspending labour one day in every ten. And in our own country, when an attempt was made, in time of war, to work a royal manufactory without a pause—at the end of a few months it was ascertained that the largest amount of work had been accomplished by the hands exempted from Sunday labour.[1] Master manufacturers have stated that they could perceive an evident deterioration in the quality of the goods pro-

[1] "Not many years ago, a contractor went on to the west with his hired men and teams to make a turnpike road. At first he paid no regard to the Sabbath; but continued his work as on other days. He soon found, however, that the ordinances of nature, no less than the moral law, were against him. His labourers became sickly, his teams grew poor and feeble, and he was fully convinced that more was lost than gained by working on the Lord's day. So true is it that the Sabbath-day labourer, like the glutton and the drunkard, undermines his health, and prematurely hastens the infirmities of age, and his exit from the world."—*Dr. Humphrey, of America.*

duced as the week drew near a close, just because the tact, alertness, and energy of the workers began to experience inevitable exhaustion. When a steamer on the Thames blew up, not long ago, the firemen and stokers laid the blame on their broken Sabbath: it stupefied and embittered them—made them blunder at their work, and heedless what havoc these blunders might create. And we have been informed that, when the engines of an extensive Steam-Packet Company in the south of England were getting constantly damaged, the mischief was instantly repaired by giving the men, what the bounty of their Creator had given them long before, the rest of each seventh day. And what is so essential to industrial efficiency, is no less indispensable to the labourer's health and longevity. This was well explained before a Committee of the House of Commons by an accomplished physician, Dr. Farre :—

"Although the night apparently equalizes the circulation well, yet it does not sufficiently restore its balance for the attainment of a *long* life. Hence one day in seven, by the bounty of Providence, is thrown in as a day of compensation, to perfect by its repose the animal system. You may easily determine this question as a matter of fact, by trying it on beasts of burden. Take that fine animal the horse, and work him to the full extent of his powers every day of the week, or give him rest one day in seven, and you will soon perceive, by the superior vigour with which he performs his functions on the other six days, that this rest is necessary to his wellbeing. Man, possessing a superior nature, is borne along by the very

vigour of his mind, so that the injury of *continued* diurnal exertion and excitement on his animal system is not so immediately apparent as it is in the brute; but, in the long-run, he breaks down more suddenly: it abridges the length of his life and that vigour of his old age, which (as to mere animal power) ought to be the object of his preservation. . . . . This is said simply as a physician, and without reference at all to the theological question; but if you consider further the proper effect of real Christianity, namely, peace of mind, confiding trust in God, and good-will to man, you will perceive in this source of renewed vigour to the mind, and through the mind to the body, an additional spring of life imparted from this higher use of the Sabbath as a holy rest."

The Sabbath is God's special present to the working man, and one chief object is to prolong his life and preserve efficient his working tone. In the vital system it acts like a compensation-pond: it replenishes the spirits, the elasticity, and vigour, which the last six days have drained away, and supplies the force which is to fill the six days succeeding. And in the economy of existence it answers the same purpose as, in the economy of income, is answered by a savings bank. The frugal man who puts aside a pound to-day, and another pound next month, and who in a quiet way is always laying up his stated pound from time to time, when he grows old and frail gets not only the same pounds back again, but a good many pounds besides. And the conscientious man who husbands one day of existence every week—who, instead of allowing the Sabbath to be trampled and torn in the

hurry and scramble of life, treasures it devoutly up—the Lord of the Sabbath keeps it for him, and in length of days and a hale old age gives it back with usury. The savings bank of human existence is the weekly Sabbath-day.

Another purpose for which the Father of Earth's Families has presented the workman with this day, is to enhance his domestic comfort and make him happy in his home. If it were not for this beneficent arrangement, many a toiling man would scarcely ever know the gentle glories and sweet endearments of his own fireside. Idle people are sometimes surfeited with the society of one another, and wealthy people, however busy, can buy an occasional holiday. But though the working man gets from his employer only one or two days of pastime in all the year, his God has given him fifty-two Sabbaths; and it is these Sabbaths which impart the sanctity and sweetness to the poor man's home. If he has finished his marketing, and cleared off his secular engagements on Saturday night, it is marvellous what a look of leisure and bright welcome ushers in the morrow, and what a spirit of serene expectancy breathes through the tidy and well-trimmed chamber. The peace of God lights up the pious labourer's dwelling, and reserved from a toil-worn week, the radiance of true love pours freely forth in these gleams of Sabbath sunshine. With graceful tint it touches the deal chairs and homely table, and converts the little square of carpeting into "a wonder of the loom." It plays iridescent among the quaint ornaments of the mantel-shelf, streams over the hearthstone, and perches on the

eight-day clock—the St. Elm of rough weather past—the omen of good days to come. It penetrates affectionate bosoms, and revives old memories deep and tender, which, but for such weekly resurrection, might have died for ever; and with early interest and endearment it suffuses that face which on Sabbath morns is always young, and reminds the proud possessor of that wealth of quiet wisdom and thoughtful kindness with which the Lord has blessed his lot. And in the thaw of friendly and thankful feelings, in the flow of emotions cordial and devout, silent praises sparkle in the eye, and the husband's love and the father's joy well up to the very brim.

> "Hail, Sabbath! thee I hail, the poor man's day:
> On other days the man of toil is doomed
> To eat his joyless bread, lonely; the ground
> Both seat and board, screened from the winter's cold
> And summer's heat by neighbouring hedge or tree.
> But on this day, embosomed in his home,
> He shares the frugal meal with those he loves;
> With those he loves he shares the heartfelt joy
> Of giving thanks to God."

But beyond all these, God's gift of the Sabbath should be precious to the working world as its main opportunity for moral and spiritual improvement, and as its best preparative for a happy immortality. Whilst eternity is hastening apace, the exigencies of each successive moment are banishing the thought of it, and many are surprised into the great Hereafter before they have distinctly perceived that themselves are on the road to it. The Sabbath brings a weekly pause, and in its own mild but earnest accents says to each, Whither art thou going? whilst its

benignant hours invite the pilgrim of earth to that better country of which it is at once the angel and the specimen. The Sabbath brings leisure; it gives a day for thinking; and it brings seclusion. From the daily vortex—from the crowd so dizzy and profane, it snatches the whirling waif —it pulls him aside into its little sanctuary, and leaves him alone with God. On the table of the busy man, whether rich or poor, it spreads the open Bible, and wakes again the Oracle which has spoken the saving word to thousands. To the intent and adoring eye it unveils that wondrous cross where redemption was achieved and God was reconciled; and by the vista of one radiant tomb it guides the musing spirit far beyond the land of graves; whilst perfumed gales and Eolian pulses from its opened window bespeak the nearer heaven, and stir the soul with immortality. To the man who has got the Sabbatic sentiment—to the man who has received from above the spiritual instinct, what a baptism of strength and joy does the Lord's day bring! From prayerful slumber he wakes amid its gentle light, and finds it spreading round him like a balm. There are hope and comfort in its greeting, and from prayerful retirement he joins his family circle with peace in his conscience and freshness in all his feelings. The books which he reads, and the truths which he hears, expand his intellect, and fill it with thoughts noble, pure, and heavenly. The public worship gives rise, and, by giving outlet, gives increase to hallowed emotions and Christian affections. The psalmody awakens gratitude, cheerfulness, and praise; and the comprehensive prayers and confessions remind him of evils which he himself has

overlooked, and perils and temptations of which he was not aware. Interceding for others, his soul dilates in sympathy and public spirit. Friends vaguely remembered—friends long parted or on foreign shores, and on bustling days well-nigh forgotten—now join his earnest fellowship; and prayer hallows while it deepens ancient amity. The poor, the sick, the broken-hearted, prisoners, slaves, the whole family of sorrow, flit before the suppliant's eye and leave him with a softer heart. And the realm and its rulers recur at this sacred moment, and every sentiment is merged in loyalty and Christian patriotism. And the heralds of salvation, pastors, teachers, missionaries, with all the evangelistic agency, are recalled to mind, and whilst his interest in Christ's cause becomes more personal, his soul expands in catholicity. And, if in a willing mood, from the Word read and expounded he carries home enlightenment, invigoration, impulse; and with big emotions, and blessed hopes, the Sabbath sends him forth on a busy week and a restless world, a tranquil Presence and an elevating Power.

To cross an Eastern desert is often arduous work. And as they jog on their grunting asses, or swing on their melancholy camels; as the sun pours his downright embers, and shadows are projected short and round; as the water-bags grow empty, and for lack of pomegranate or citron each squeezes in his cheek the juiciest pebble he can find, the travellers are apt to droop into a moody silence, and lose all liking for their journey. With dust in every pore, and fever in every vein, nobody cares for his neighbour, nor feels the slightest interest in any

earthly thing. And should some sprightly comrade still hold out, his wit is resented as a rudeness, and he himself is hated for his irksome glee. But presently they sight the green banner in the distant sky, the palm-signal which tells of water, and verdure, and repose. And as they reach the leafy tent, and fling themselves on the cool ground, and climb for the date-clusters, and through the sandy filter scoop the hidden fountain, their soul is restored, and their interest in all things revives. Wife and children again are dear, and home is much desired; and as the artist points his pencil, and the scholar takes out his book, the caravan dissolves in friendly talk and flowing soul. Reader, like that desert route, your daily toil is a life-wasting drudgery. Resumed morning by morning, and followed hour by hour, it drains the strength and dries the soul. But at the end of every weekly march, behold yon green OASIS. Like palm-tree shadow, behold the welcome which the rest-day waves! And as it bids you eat and drink abundantly, do you obey the genial sign. Turn in to tarry beneath the refreshful canopy, and you will find the recompense in a replenished heart and a renovated home; and as full of heaven's peace and strength you issue from its sweet asylum, you will resume life's journey rejoicing.

But though we have mentioned the uses of the Sabbath first, we must not forget its obligation. If you have got a healthy mind,—one conscientious, and dutiful, and right with God,—your main question will ever be, not, What is for my interest? but, What is right? What would God have me to do? You will have no fear but that duty and

interest will in the long-run coincide; still, you will perceive a positive and immediate pleasure in obedience—it will be your meat and drink to do the will of your Father in heaven. And on this subject, the will of God is plain and peremptory. As early as the creation of the human race, He showed his purpose regarding the Sabbath. "On the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made; and God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it; because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made." Accordingly, when in all the pomp of Mount Sinai, that moral law was given which has ever since been the great standard of right and wrong, the fourth of the Ten Commandments was, "Remember the Sabbath-day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work; but the seventh is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor the stranger that is within thy gates. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath-day and hallowed it." And all through, from the first book of the Bible to the last, we find the primeval blessing still following the day, and the people of God devoutly keeping it. And perhaps there is no command which a special Providence has more signally guarded; none, the observance of which God has crowned with a more abundant recompense, and none of which the violation has been followed by a swifter or sorer frown. The

will of God is clear : the command is plain and full ; and it is not easy to estimate his guilt who tramples under foot an institution clothed with such Divine authority, and fraught with such Divine benignity.

And now the question comes round, How are we to spend the day so as to fulfil its Author's gracious purposes ?

Amongst Sabbatic employments the most obvious is the public and private worship of God. On other days you have little time for meditation and prayer, but on a Sabbath morning you have leisure. Take your Bible, read a portion, and think over it. In prayer, try to remember the sins and errors of the week, and ask pardon for the Saviour's sake ; and try to recall your recent mercies, and, as you reckon them one by one, bless the Lord for His benefits. Consider what further blessings you stand in need of, and with humble earnestness implore them from that munificent Giver who bestows so bounteously, and "who upbraideth not." If you have a household, let prayer and a passage of God's Word begin your family day ; and then let all resort to the house of God together. When there, not only should you listen to the messages and lessons which God's minister brings you, but seek to put your whole heart into the services of prayer and praise. The thing which has made you sometimes feel dull in a place of worship was, that you did not worship. Your body was there, but your mind was everywhere. Pray that God would fix your thoughts ; and if you be all *ear* when the chapter is read and the sermon preached, all *voice* when the psalms are sung, and all *heart* when the

prayers are offered, you will not weary at the time, and the hallowed effect will follow you home.

A great help towards spending the Lord's day rightly is a well-selected library. From a friend you may borrow a good book now and then; but it is desirable to have a little stock of your own. It would be a great matter if you could procure a book like Henry's "Commentary," or the Commentary published by the Tract Society, or Barnes's "Notes on the New Testament;" for besides throwing great light on the Bible, it would furnish you with endless Sunday reading. And if you wish to get solid and extensive acquaintance with sacred truth, you cannot do better than master Dwight's "System of Theology." We have known working men who did so. Books like the "Pilgrim's Progress," and D'Aubigné's "History of the Reformation," the Lives of Henry Martyn, and John Newton, and Colonel Gardiner, Abbott's "Young Christian," Williams's "Missionary Enterprise in the South Seas," and Moffat's "Labours in Africa,"—such books would be interesting to your children, as well as instructive to yourselves. And it would be well to possess and read prayerfully such books as Pike's "Persuasives to Early Piety," and James's "Anxious Inquirer," and Baxter's "Saints' Everlasting Rest." All these books have been published in cheap forms; and in shops where they sell books second-hand you may get the largest of them for very little money. The man who has such companions in his house, and who has any real earnestness about his immortal soul, will find ways and means to spend profitably each returning Sabbath.

In order to make it a cheerful day to your children, you would do well to enter zealously into their Sabbath employments. It is likely that you send them to the Sunday-school; but the punctuality with which they attend, and the proficiency which they exhibit there, depend very much on their parents. If you invite them to repeat to you their hymns and other lessons, and if they find that diligence is rewarded, not only by a teacher's love, but by a father's smile, they will ply their tasks with new vivacity. As a reward of good conduct, you might read over to them, or allow them to read to you, one of the little books they bring home. Children are, in general, fond of music; and you might sometimes spend half-an-hour very sweetly in singing psalms or hymns together.

Addressing our industrious fellow-citizens, we cannot close without warning them against a twofold jeopardy which presently threatens the day marked off by God for the labourer's leisure. There is an attempt on the part of some wealthy men to buy up the Sabbath of the poor, and there is a tendency on the part of some working men to pilfer the Sabbath of their fellow-workmen. Rich men hasting to become still richer, are anxious to receive their letters on the Lord's day; and in order to save time for business, they wish to perform their journeys on that day; and in order to increase the profits of their investments in railways, and steamers, and tea-gardens, and rural taverns, they are anxious to create among the working classes a taste for Sunday trips and pleasure parties. They bribe the engineer and the letter-carrier, and for the rich man's money these workmen barter their Sabbath; and they

tempt the town artisan and the city shopman, and for the sake of the cheap excursion or the merry ploy, the artisan and shopman are enticed to squander both their money and their souls.

On the other hand, from improvidence, or indolence, or some other cause, the Sabbath morning finds many working people with no food in their houses, and going to purchase it they compel their fellow-workmen, the grocers and butchers and bakers and their assistants, to toil in their service half the Sabbath-day; whilst other workmen hie away to the river or the railway station, and compel another class of their fellow-workmen, sailors and engine-drivers and waiters in taverns, to toil till late at night in supplying them with pleasure. And in this way, in the capital of the kingdom, there are 20,000 people working in shops, and at least as many more connected with public conveyances and places of public entertainment, who never know a Sabbath. And where are the robbers who have wrenched from these British citizens their birthright of a weekly repose? Who are the tyrants who thus grind the faces of the poor? We grieve to answer,—poor men, working men.

Now, recollecting that the Sabbath is the poor man's day,—that it is the providential bulwark against over-production and under-payment,—that it is the grand restorative of the labourer's wasted strength and spirits, and the reviver of his domestic joys,—that it is, in short, the palladium of his present and eternal happiness—and recollecting further, that if the poor lend it to one another they must soon sell it to the rich, and by and bye do seven

days' work for the six days' pay, we put it to yourselves, if the workman who makes a merchandise of his Sabbath is not a traitor to his class? And leaving religious considerations out of view, we ask if the labourer who spurns the filthy lucre offered for his Sabbath hours, and who, perhaps, sacrifices a good situation over and above,—we ask, if, instead of being jeered for his scruples, he does not deserve the thanks of all his fellows, as the Hampden or the Tell of industrial freedom?

So far as the Sunday excursion goes, the workman forfeits little who does without it. "As it is not all gold that glitters, neither is it all true pleasure that usurps the name. There is a way which seemeth right unto a man but the end thereof are the ways of death. Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful, and the end of that mirth is heaviness. Never shall I forget the mournful accent with which a condemned criminal, shortly before he was executed, said in my hearing, that his crimes began with small thefts, and pleasure excursions on the Lord's Day."[1] To us no excursion is pleasure which is not pleasant when ended. But in what does the pleasure of the Sunday ploy consist next morning? Is it in the choice friendships you have made, or the sum which you have added to your savings? Is it in the additional energy which bulges in your muscles, and the limpid clearness with which the stream of thought and feeling flows? Or is it in the great calm which fills your conscience—the happy thought how much you have done for God and for your fellow-men? Or is it in the unwonted neatness with which your habita-

[1] Dr. King's Words to the Working Classes on the Sabbath Question.

tion smiles on your return, and the fresh alacrity with which you resume the morrow's task? "I lodged," says a shrewd observer, "within a stone-cast of the Great Manchester and Birmingham Railway. I could hear the roaring of the trains along the line, from morning till near mid-day, and during the whole afternoon; and, just as the evening was setting in, I sauntered down to the gate by which a return train was discharging its hundreds of passengers, fresh from the Sabbath amusements of the country, that I might see how they looked. There did not seem much of enjoyment about the wearied and somewhat draggled groups; they wore, on the contrary, rather an unhappy physiognomy, as if they had missed spending the day quite to their minds, and were now returning, sad and disappointed, to the round of toil from which it ought to have proved a sweet interval of relief. A congregation just dismissed from hearing a vigorous discourse would have borne, to a certainty, a more cheerful air."[1]

Our reader has likely tried the plan of Sunday diversions already. Have they made you a healthier or a happier man? Have they made you richer, or a more respected member of society? Or have they not consumed a large amount of your hard-won earnings, and often sent you to Monday's toils more weary than you left them on Saturday night? Have they not involved you with worthless and abandoned acquaintances, and sometimes left on your mind a gloomy foreboding and a guilty fear? And do you never tremble to think what the end of these things must be? Many a Sunday trip has had for its

[1] Hugh Miller's *First Impressions of England.*

terminus the jail, the convict ship, the scaffold. Many a broken Sabbath has been the first step in a career which ended in drunkenness, in theft, in murder. And every Sabbath-breaker is going forward to the bar of God. Dear reader, accept as a timely message these friendly lines. Seek pardon for the past, and in the Lord's strength make trial of the better way. For the sake of a peaceful conscience, for the sake of a prosperous week, for the sake of a happy home, for the sake of an approving God, "Remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy," and you will shortly prove the truth of the promise, "If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: then thou shalt delight thyself in the Lord, and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob, thy father; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

V.

THE FIRESIDE.

In Southern Europe they have no household fires; but when there is snow on the mountains or ice in the wind they get a chafing-dish, and comfort their toes with glowing charcoal. And in Russia and the north, so fiercely blows the winter-blast, that they are fain to defend themselves behind an entrenchment of flues, and stoves, and fire-clay furnaces. And it is only our own happy clime, so crisp in the morning, and so mild at the winter-noon, which rejoices in that glorious institution—the open hearth and blazing ingle.

As to the fuel or the style of the fireplace, we have no sectarian feeling. The old English method is to adjust in a vast chimney a log of pine, with a few supporting fagots; and as the flame leaps, and roars, and crackles on a clear night in some lofty banquet-hall, it makes a right baronial blaze. In as far as it needs no grate, this plan is rather economical; but as it also needs a grand mansion, with turrets on the top, and an ancient forest round it, the saving is somewhat counterbalanced. And a good fire may be made by flanking a few peats with a lump of coke or anthracite; and if it be Wales or the Highlands, and

if there be rime on the ground and frozen rooks on the tree, the blue smoke is beautiful and the turfy odour delicious. But for us in London, where peats are dear as penny loaves, it is a great satisfaction to know that they yield a profusion of dust. It was a "bonny" fire to which King James treated his wealthy subject, George Heriot; and still "bonnier," in the eyes of a needy prince, was the fire with which the goldsmith repaid his hospitality, next morning, when he fed the flame, not with billets of cedar, but with the King's "Promises to Pay." And very beautiful is the mountain of blazing splints, with a torch of candle-coal in the front of them—like the mirrored sun in a golden temple of Peru,—such as may be seen in Lanarkshire or Durham, or some other igneous paradise, flinging through all the recesses of a mighty farm-kitchen its wealth of revealing flame. But bonfires like these are beyond the reach of authors and readers on the banks of the Thames; and therefore we set down a recipe which we owe to a far-travelled brother, and which we have often found very seductive about ten o'clock at night:—

"Take three or four fragments of Wallsend. Lay them together, and when thoroughly lighted, take the tongs and place tenderly over them all the large cinders from under the grate. And then over the cinders, and layer by layer, shovel every particle of ashes, as carefully as if it were diamond dust; and in half an hour the skilful concrete will be one huge and ardent ruby. Then talk or read whilst your wife darns stockings, or makes the baby's mittens." Besides greatly lightening the dustman's labours

next morning, this device will be found a great saving of fuel.

And as for the fireplace, please yourselves. We have never seen any which we liked so well as the Carron grate in our own nursery, full many years agone. On either panel a cast-metal shepherd played on a cast-metal pipe; and on the shining hob there often simmered a few prunes or a honey-posset, or some nice syrup, more effectual in curing a cold than in preventing its return; and in some retreat below it a mouse had found a cosy hermitage, and every time that they stirred the fire the mouse came out, and then ran back again as soon as the pother was over.

But after all, the charm of an English hearth is neither polished bars nor blazing brands, but the true and loving faces which it shines upon. Its charm is the conjugal affection, the parental hope, the filial piety, the neighbourly good-will which cluster round it and form THE FIRESIDE.

It is the difficult task of the workman's wife to make the Fireside an attractive and improving place—a place round which husbands and sons will be glad to gather when the work of the day is done. And in attempting this, it may be well to bear in mind the following hints.

1. *Be Tidy.*—Some wives who are sufficiently industrious have no talent for neatness. They are constantly scrubbing and scouring, and they keep chairs and tables marching and counter-marching from one apartment to another; but, except the turmoil at the time, and the

humid exhalations afterwards, there are no products of their ill-directed energy; in a day or two, all is the same dirt and disorder as ever. Others, you do not know when their house-cleaning is done, for you never find them worried and in dishabille; but, somehow, their furniture always finds its proper place; their hearth is always bright, and a limpid daylight always looks in at their unsullied window.

Few things are more apt to send a man to the play-house or tavern, than a filthy or uproarious fireside. When he comes home in the evening, and finds his apartment a chaos of frowzy garments and broken dishes, potato-parings and squalling children; or converted into a laundry, steaming with wet linen, and fragrant with soap-suds, he is very apt to light his pipe and sally forth in search of a more cheerful scene. And, therefore, every woman who would save her husband from the gin-shop and bad company, should contrive to get all her bustle and rough work completed betimes, and have a trim and smiling chamber awaiting his return.[1]

2. *Be Thrifty.*—The picture of an industrious and frugal housewife was sketched by an inspired pencil long ago, and many a Scotch and English matron may be quoted who has gone far to repeat the original. "Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies. The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he

[1] There are now wash-houses provided in many places, where, for a payment of twopence or threepence, an active woman may do all the washing of an ordinary family in a few hours. Hot water, drying apparatus, smoothing irons, and a mangle are provided; and besides all the economy of time and money, the linen is dried without being soiled, and your own abode is saved the horrors of the weekly ablution.

shall have no need of spoil. She seeketh wool and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands. She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms. She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff. She is not afraid of the snow for her household; for all her household are doubly clothed. Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land. She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness. She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness. Her children arise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her. Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all. Favour is deceitful and beauty is vain; but a woman that feareth the Lord she shall be praised."[1]

A man may work ever so hard; but if his wife be not a good manager, no money will preserve his children from rags, nor his abode from wretchedness. And if, after all his earnings, he comes home to a joyless lodging; if, before he can obtain his supper, he has to go in search of his gossiping helpmeet, and by the way picks from the gutter his tattered son and heir; if he finds that his wife is too fine a lady to handle the broom or the needle; if he is ashamed when a neighbour drops in, or if, for want of a timely stitch, he himself can scarcely venture out, he is sure to grow abject or broken-hearted. He perceives that it is of little moment whether, at the end of the week, he brings home half-a-sovereign or half-a-crown, and sees no use in procuring gay dresses and bright ribbons, which

[1] Proverbs xxxi.

only render more grotesque the scarecrows around him. On the other hand, he must be a mean-spirited mortal who can see the wife of his youth toiling and striving to secure respectability and comfort for himself and his household, without straining his every nerve to help her. A savage may be content to bask in the sunshine, and look on whilst the mother of his children is catching fish or planting yams; but in England we trust there are few of these lazy churls. And we have known of instances not a few where a man has been reclaimed from idle or self-indulgent habits by the influence of a judicious and warm-hearted wife. The following is an instance, which we the more gladly give because it occurred in the sister isle:—

"One day," says Mrs. Hall, "we entered a cottage in the suburbs of Cork: a young woman was knitting stockings at the door. It was as neat and comfortable as any in the most prosperous districts of England. We tell her brief story in her own words, as nearly as we can recall them:—

"'My husband is a wheelwright, and always earns his guinea a week; he was a good workman, but the love of drink was so strong in him, that it wasn't often that he brought me more than five shillings out of his one pound on a Saturday night, and it broke my heart to see the children too ragged to send to school, to say nothing of the starved look they had, out of the little I could give them. Well, God be praised, he took the pledge, and the next Sunday he laid twenty-one shillings upon the chair you sit upon! Oh, didn't I give thanks upon my bended knees that night!

"'Still I was fearful it would not last, and I spent no more than the five shillings I used to, saying to myself, Maybe the money will be more wanted than it is now! Well, the next week he brought me the same, and the next, and the next, until eight weeks had passed; and, glory to God, there was no change for the bad in my husband! and all the while he never asked me why there was nothing better for him out of his earnings. So I felt there was no fear for him, and the ninth week, when he came home to me, I had this table and these six chairs, one for myself, four for the children, and one for him; and I was dressed in a new gown, and the children all had new clothes and shoes and stockings, and upon his chair I put a bran-new suit, and upon his plate, I put the bill and receipt for them all, just the eight sixteen shillings, the cost that I had saved out of his wages, not knowing what might happen, and that always went for drink. And he cried, good lady and gentlemen, he cried like a baby, but 'twas with thanks to God; and now where's a healthier man than my husband in the whole county of Cork, or a happier wife than myself, or decenter or better fed children than my own?'"

3. *Keep a Good Temper.*—Nothing can be more vexatious than a smoky fireside. A cold wind is sifting through the passage, and a handful of moist brushwood is sputtering under the coals, and just when you hope that it is about to kindle, a black tornado comes whirling down the vent, and, as sooty flakes and Egyptian darkness fill the air, eyes water, nostrils tingle, the baby screams, grandmother coughs, the sash flies open, Boreas enters, and the

very cat disgusted leaves the room. And like that smoking chimney is the house whose presiding genius is swift to wrath, or sullen. Jaded with work or harassed by the day's cross accidents; often drenched in the rain, or draggled by the world's rough usage, the man of toil wends homeward. "Ha, ha!" he says, "I shall soon be warm: I shall see the fire." But alas! the fuel is green, and the chimney does not draw. Displeased by some untoward incident, or in a fretful humour, his yoke-fellow receives him with reproaches, or a frown, or treats him to long and troublous stories; and instead of the bright solace and glowing comfort, on which he vainly counted, he watches the smouldering wrath and its swelling puffs, till, in despair, he flings down the bellows, and rushes into the smokeless tempest out of doors.

No doubt a wife has many things to vex her. Your work is hard. Your cares are many. You have a host of things to manage; things so minute that you are not thanked if they all go right, but at the same time so weighty that you are exceedingly upbraided if the least of them goes wrong. And when your foot is on the cradle, and the saucepan is boiling over, and the last torn garment engages either hand, a hungry boy or an impatient husband rushes in shouting for his dinner and a dozen other things directly. And in the midst of all that worry, nothing is so natural as to fume and scold and lose your temper; but in the midst of all that worry, nothing were so noble as to remain serene, and self-possessed, and cheerful. And if you seek help from God, He will enable you to possess your soul in patience. He can give you peace and

sprightliness, and make you the ventilator of the smoky chamber. Amidst surrounding tumult, He can supply you with soft words and gentle looks, and, like the bird of fable, make your very presence the antidote of storms. He can give you that cheerful countenance which doeth good like a medicine—a medicine which, if it does the patient good, does still more good to those by whom it is administered.

4. *Cultivate Personal Piety.*—It is a great matter for a wife and a mother to be intelligent and well informed; for without this she cannot exert a lasting ascendency over her children, nor be the fit associate of a thoughtful and strong-minded husband. But more important than a cultivated understanding is a sanctified heart. Of all possessions the most permanent, it is of all influences the most powerful; for even those who hate it most bitterly are constrained to yield it a constant though reluctant homage. Does any matter cause you grief? Like Hannah, that "woman of a sorrowful spirit," lay it before the Lord, and your countenance will be no more sad. Does any course of conduct perplex you? "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he will direct thy steps." Is any undertaking completed, and can you personally do no more in order to promote it? "Commit thy works unto the Lord, and thy thoughts shall be established." Do you wish to be blameless in your personal demeanour and thorough in domestic duties? Take for your guide the Word of God; and, "when thou goest it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest it shall keep thee; and when thou awakest it shall talk with thee." Are you anxious to

prepossess in favour of piety the mind of your partner? Then "be in subjection to your own husband; that if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; while they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear (that is, your modest and respectful demeanour). And let your adorning be, not that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price."

Of all your duties the most arduous is the right training of your offspring. It is a duty which mainly devolves on you. Of all persons, a mother is most constantly with her children, and of all influences her teaching, her example, and her prayers are the likeliest to decide their future character.

Last summer a famous German writer died. His young days were the winter of his life; for, when a few weeks old he had lost his mother, and in all his rude tossings from place to place he had fallen in with no kind welcomes nor any gentle words. But somehow he contrived to get to college, and was cramming his mind with such dry learning as colleges can give, when one stormy night in the Christmas recess he stopped at a country inn. "As I entered the parlour darkened by the evening twilight, I was suddenly wrapped in an unexpected embrace, while amid showers of tears and kisses, I heard these words, 'Oh! my child—my dear child!' Though I knew that this greeting was not for me, yet the motherly pressure seemed to me the herald of better days, the beautiful

welcome to a new and better world, and a sweet trembling passed over me. As soon as lighted candles came in, the illusion vanished. The modest hostess started from me in some consternation; then looking at me with smiling embarrassment, she told me that my height exactly corresponded to that of her son, whom she expected home that night from a distant school. As he did not arrive that night she tended and served me with a loving cordiality, as if to make amends to herself for the disappointment of his absence. The dainties which she had prepared for him she bestowed on me, and next morning she packed up a supply of provisions, procured me a place in the Diligence, wrapped me up carefully against frost and rain, and refusing to impoverish my scanty purse by taking any payment, dismissed me with tender admonitions and motherly farewells. Yet all this kindness was bestowed, not on me, but on the image of her absent son! Such is a mother's heart! I cannot describe the feelings with which I left the village. My whole being was in a strange delicious confusion." And in point of fact that motherly embrace had opened in the bosom of the orphan boy the fountain of pleasant fancies and noble feelings which have rendered Henry Zschokke the most popular story-writer, and one of the truest patriots, in all his fatherland. It was the only night when he had ever known a home, and from that brief hour he carried enough away to give a friendly aspect to mankind, and a joyful purpose to his future life.

Like the kind hostess, your own heart is full of motherly affection. Let it freely forth. Let your children feel how

fondly you yearn towards them, and what a delight it is to you to see and make them happy. This affection is a logic which the dullest can understand, and it will insure the swiftest compliance with your wishes. This cord of love is of all chains the longest lasting; the most vicious cannot break it, and even when you yourself are mouldering in the clay it will moor the wayward spirit to your memory, and keep it from much sin. Therefore, see to it —not only that you love them, but that you make them conscious of your lovingness.

And then, by the attraction of your own tenderness, seek to draw them into the love of God. If your own be the right religion, the living God will be your chiefest joy. You will look up to Him as your Father and Friend, and will desire to move through your dwelling, and travel through the world in the light of His constant complacency. And if you have got this length,—if through the great Atonement you have got into the peace of God, —there will be Bible lessons in all you do, and a living Gospel in your gentle looks. Your children will perceive that to love God is the true way to be happy, and whatever else it may accomplish, they will learn to associate the religion of Jesus with a dear parent's shining face and blameless walk.

But, after all, if you wish to exert a hallowing influence on your children now, and if you would see them give themselves to God in the dew of their youth, you must abound in prayer as your surest and most unfailing resource. We speak of adamant and other substances as hard to fuse: we forget that the hardest of all is a human

will. To bring the will of your little child to the bending or melting point, needs a softening power none other than the grace of God. We speak of locks which are hard to open; we forget that the most intricate of all is the heart of man. It has wards and windings into which even a mother's love cannot insinuate, and of which God's Spirit only knows the way. And wherefore is it that God has given you this vehement solicitude for your children's souls, whilst at the same time He shows you that you cannot there introduce the truths which you love, nor there enshrine the Saviour whom you yourself adore? Wherefore, but to shut you up in lowly dependence and earnest expectancy to Him who hath the key of David, and who, when his set time comes, will open the door and take conclusive possession? And surely, among all the supplications which reach the mercy-seat, there is none more welcome than the cry of a believing parent for her darling child. Surely, there is none which the Great High Priest will present with a more gracious alacrity, or the God and Father of our Lord Jesus hear with a more Divine benignity. And of all the petitions filed in the Court of Heaven, there is surely none less likely to be forgotten, nor one which, should you meanwhile quit this praying ground, you may leave more confidently to the care and love of your Advocate within the veil.

But by far the happiest home is that whose heads, like Zacharias and Elisabeth, are of one mind, and who walk in the statutes and ordinances of God together. In that case, you will be able to take counsel together, and aid one another in the anxious business of teaching and training

your children. Your prayers on their behalf will ascend in concert. The example of the one will not neutralize the instructions of the other; and whichsoever is first summoned away will have the comfort of knowing that the work will not stop when their teacher dies.

Having, therefore, said so much to wives and mothers, we may perhaps be allowed, ere closing this section, to offer a few friendly hints to fathers and husbands. But what better hints can we tender than the plain directions given in the Bible long ago?

That Bible bids married people be mutually respectful. It requires the wife to "reverence her husband," and the husband is enjoined to "give honour to the wife." One day, when Oberlin was eighty years of age, in climbing a mountain he was obliged to lean on his son-in-law, whilst his wife, less infirm, walked behind by herself. But, meeting some of his parishioners, the good pastor felt so awkward at this apparent lack of gallantry, that he stopped to explain the reason. Was it not a fine feature in the old worthy's character, and would it not be well for the world if it contained more of this Christian chivalry? Would it not be well if it contained more of those hallowed unions, where people see to the last with the same admiring and affectionate eyes with which they first learned to love one another? And would there not be more of these unions, if people learned to love one another "in the Lord;" if the attachment which originated in good sense, and congenial taste and moral worth, were perpetuated in Christian principle? Piety softens the feelings and refines the sentiments. It renders its possessor "courteous and kindly

affectioned." And of that courtesy and kind affection who is the rightful object, if it be not his nearest earthly friend?

On a Saturday night you may have noticed a firm-built fellow stalking along, with his pipe in his cheek and his hands in his pockets, whilst a forlorn creature limped after him, shifting from one tired arm to another the laden market-basket. And in choosing a companion for life, you were sorry that the lazy rascal had not thought of a donkey. But you spent the next hour with a shop-mate in his own abode; and, whether it were to display the meekness of his wan and timid consort, or to give you an august idea of himself as a lord of creation, you cannot tell, but he always spoke to her with such fierce contempt, and gave his commands so haughtily, that it filled you with burning indignation, and, in the spirit of the old knight-errantry, you felt almost tempted to cudgel the coarse and unmanly despot. Happy is it for yourself that your own feelings are more noble and manly. Happy are you in being blessed with a partner whom you are proud "to have and to hold, to love and to cherish." Happy are you to retain the refinement and elevation of character, and the youthfulness of affection, which make the husband still the lover; and happy are you to have a wife, so true and wise and self-denied, that to care for her comfort and share her society is still as delightful as when first she gave you her troth.

So lofty is the Bible standard of conjugal devotedness, that it seems fitter for a pulpit text than for quotation in a paper so familiar as this. "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it,

that he might sanctify it, and present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." Think of this. The Saviour loved the Church in order to make it holy. His love was not only self-sacrificing, but it was hallowing. Its tendency and effect were to make its objects better. And those who are joined in your sacred relation are to take this Divine example as the model of their love. You must seek the improvement of one another. The consciousness of sins and defects in His disciples did not cool towards them the Saviour's affection. It only excited His tender sagacity and faithful skill to attempt their removal; and by gracious methods, one by one, He cured their infirmities. There was no arrogance in His tone, no disdain in His spirit; no haste nor vexation in His manner; but so mollifying was His gentleness, and so mild was His sanctity, that when He healed the fault He did not hurt the feelings. And had we something of His high purpose, there would be little danger of affection decaying. There would be no risk of fault-finding, and no temptation to connive at sin. Reproofs would not break the head; and there would be no longer need that love should be blind.

And let us hope that you will contribute a father's authority to a mother's tenderness in the effort to bring up a devout and pious family. We trust that there is no need to inscribe the depreciating sentence on your door.[1] We trust that yours is a family which calls upon

[1] Alluding to the words chalked on the doors of infected houses during the Plague of London, Philip Henry used to say, "If the worship of God be not in the house, write, 'Lord, have mercy upon us!' on the door."

God's name. Teach your children to be loving and generous to one another, and promptly obedient to their mother and you. Seek to fill their minds with veneration of God, and with early abhorrence of sin. See to it that your own conduct is obviously ruled by Bible maxims, and let your appeal be direct and frequent "to the Law and to the Testimony." Sustain no frivolous excuse for absence at the hour of prayer, and try by all means to endear the sanctuary. Like the good citizen, sung by Transatlantic bard:[1]—

"His hair is crisp, and black, and long,
His face is like the tan;
His brow is wet with honest sweat,
He earns whate'er he can,
And looks the whole world in the face,
For he owes not any man.

He goes on Sunday to the church,
And sits among his boys;
He hears the parson pray and preach;
He hears his daughter's voice
Singing in the village choir,
And it makes his heart rejoice."

Which leads us to notice, lastly, that nothing makes the fireside so cheerful as a blessed hope beyond it. Even when you sit most lovingly there—though the daily task is completely done, and the infant in the cradle is fast asleep—though this is Saturday night, and to-morrow is the day of rest—though the embers are bright, and from its fat and poppling fountain in yonder coal the jet of gas flames up like a silver scimitar; and though within your little chamber all is peace, and warmth, and snug

[1] Longfellow's "Village Blacksmith."

repose—the roaring gusts and rattling drops remind you that it still is winter in the world. And when that withered leaf tapped and fluttered on the window, mother, why was it that your cheek grew pale, and something glistened in your eye? You thought it perhaps might come from the churchyard sycamore, and it sounded like a messenger from little Helen's grave. It said, "Father and Mother, think of me." Yes, dreary were the homes of earth were it not for the Home in Heaven. But see to it that yourselves be the Saviour's followers, and then to you He says, "Let not your heart be troubled! In my Father's house are many mansions: I go to prepare a place for you." And when you come to love that Saviour rightly, you will love one another better, more truly, and more tenderly. And, trusting to meet again in that world where they neither marry nor are given in marriage, a purifying hope and a lofty affection will hallow your union on earth. And, if not inscribed above your mantel-shelf, there will at least be written in your inmost spirit the motto, sent to his bride by that illustrious scholar, Bengel—

> "Jesus in heaven;
> Jesus in the heart;
> Heaven in the heart;
> The heart in heaven."

VI.

DAY DREAMS.

Caspar Rauchbilder was a German, abstruse of mind and able of body. From his ancestors he inherited a blonde complexion and a talent for boiling sugar; so that he had no trouble in acquiring either. His calling he pursued far eastward of London's famous Tower, somewhere near the docks, and where many chimneys feed the murky air of Wapping. But the thick atmosphere suited Caspar's thoughtful turn; it favoured mental abstraction, and kept aloof those obtrusive materialisms which he deemed the main obstacles to transcendental discovery. His favourite motto was, "*Ex fumo dare lucem;*"[1] and in order to enhance the partial capacity of his abode, he plied a perpetual meerschaum. He used to say that it was no wonder that the Egyptians were the wisest nation of antiquity, after three days of such glorious darkness as they had once enjoyed; and he often thought that if, like a celebrated lawyer, he could live in a cavern, he would yet be able to throw some light on the world.

It was the ninth of November, and Caspar's more frivolous companions had gone to the Lord Mayor's show.

[1] "Smoke is the sire of light;" a witty allusion to the lamp-black in printers' ink.

They went, but they saw it not. Like railway train, which dives from rustic gaze into the heart of a mountain, the show was tunnelling its invisible progress through the heart of a London fog, and it was only by the snort of trombones and the racket of drums that Cockaigne was conscious when civic majesty passed along. Our sage found higher employment for the holiday. Just as the candle in a sixpenny cathedral—such as Italian image-boys display on area-rails—just as that candle begins to come red and green through the coloured windows, when evening shrouds the city, and street-lamps are being lit, so Caspar was conscious this misty day of bright gleams in his sensorium; and he determined on improving the inward light. Before the fire he hung a shaggy coat, which he called a bosom-friend; and it deserved the name. The bosom-friend was somewhat damp; for the fog had beaded all the nap with a dirty dew. And on the table Caspar placed a German sausage and a dish of Hamburg kraut. But ere clogging his faculties with this slight refection, our philosopher thought good to improve the fit of inward clear-seeing with which he then and there felt visited. Accordingly, settling down in his easy chair, and inspissating the atmosphere with volumes of tobacco, he began to see his way through the mystery of the universe.

It was not long before the sugar-boiler beheld himself a social reformer. He recollected how often he had seen the grey or yellow dust arrive at their factory, and leave it the brilliant sugar-loaf. And in that raw article he viewed an emblem of human nature, as it comes from the

hands of priests and princes, and in that sugar-loaf he saw human nature as it quits the mill of the philosopher. There is first the boiling *in vacuo*. He would put society into the caldron, but would be careful not to raise the temperature above hot water. And in order to secure a perfect vacuum, he would relieve it of all prejudices and all property. He would pump off those national codes and positive faiths which now weigh with tremendous pressure on the human soul; and as soon as that was accomplished, it would be the work of a moment to bring sentiment and principle into a state of absolute solution—the first object to be sought by a regenerator of the social system. The next business is to clarify the melted mass. Nothing can be easier. "In our works," pursued the seer, "have we not a filter of charred bones? and have I not seen the current pass into that strainer brown as sherry, and quit it clear as crystal? In like manner let us burn the bones of the old beliefs and the outworn decencies. Ha, ha! they are now but skeletons! And from the ashes we will make a filter, through which this selfish age shall pass and emerge a New Moral World. And then, in order to preserve this sweet syrup of refined humanity, it must be caught in moulds, and consolidated, and cast, and kept. For this purpose one recommends as the best form pyramids, and Fourrier dotes about phalanxes. But these simpletons had never seen a sugar-factory. Their purblind optics were never blessed with the sight of an unbroken sugar-loaf. Talk of circles, phalanxes, and pyramids, as if nature abhorred the cone! Is it not the most comprehensive of all figures, embodying the triangle,

the circle, the ellipse, the parabola, the hyperbola? And the most graceful—suggesting at once the solidity of the pyramid, and the curving fulness of the sphere? Away with all compromise! I vow to reconstruct society on the only perfect model. I shall teach every man to be the lover of all, and the friend of none; and this pure and public-spirited product, I shall fix—I shall stereotype. Whilst yet fluent and limpid, I shall draw it off into moulds ready-made, and in Cones of Concord, in Sugar-loaves of Sympathy, society will crystallize into its final and perfect organization. And should there settle down at the inverted apex any dregs of the old system, is there not the turning-lathe to pare away the anti-social feculence? All shall be alike talented, alike strong and healthy; and all equally amiable, rich, and happy. Our crest must be the sugar-cone; our motto, SUAVITY, SOLIDITY, SINCERITY."

At this point of the speculation there mingled, with the odour of meerschaum, a smell more akin to burning bones. It was not an old belief or an outworn morality, but the pea-jacket too near the fire. The bosom-friend was burning. Caspar brushed the singed and smoking nap, and put his fingers through the brown and crumbling skirt. And lighting the lamp, he found that a neighbouring cur had played an old prank, and stolen the sausage during his reverie. However, Caspar comforted himself. The cur had stolen the sausage, but he had left the sauer-kraut and the sugar-loaf theory.

Should the reader be acquainted with any of the works lately published on the Organization of Labour and the

Reconstruction of Society, he will not laugh at the reveries of Caspar Rauchbilder. Nor will he expect us to refute them. If it be idle work to build castles in the air, it is idle work besieging them.

We know, however, that such speculations are interesting to two classes of readers. There are some profligate persons who catch at everything which puts good for evil, or which offers to relieve them from moral obligation. They are tired of their wives and children; they are tired of working; they are tired of honesty; they would fain be fingering the hard-earned savings of their fellow-labourers; and they do not like the Christian ordinance, "If any man will not work, neither shall he eat." They should be glad to have the pocket of the Shadowless Man, so that if hungry they might produce a tray with green pease and smoking cutlets, or if drowsy they might put in their hand and pull out a tent-bed with its blankets. But as the Shadowless Man will not part with his pocket, they will be content, as next best, to eat their neighbour's cutlet and sleep in their neighbour's blankets.

But besides the lazy and licentious, to whom all such schemes are welcome, we believe that at this moment many an industrious man feels so unhappy, that he would hail any change in the social system as a possible change for the better. And if, like us, he has read some of the glowing invectives and prophecies of these eager speculators, the wish may very naturally prove father to the thought, and he may fancy that nothing except a re-arrangement of society is needful to bring about a golden age.

We, too, are social reformers. We see many things which grieve us. We see much extravagance among the rich, and much improvidence among the poor. We see a great deal of pride and bitterness. We see the pride of rank, which believes that itself is porcelain, and that common men are clay. We see the bitterness of penury, which resents the wealth of others as a crime, and which deems it a proof of spirit to insult a man of higher station. We see a fearful amount of tyranny. We see the tyranny of squires and capitalists, refusing to their tenants and their servants the enjoyment of the Sabbath and freedom to worship God. And we see the tyranny of working men, compelling their fellows to connive at crime, and enforcing compliance with unreasonable rules, often by means of the greatest cruelty. These things we know, and we mourn over them. We long to see them all redressed. We long to see the rich less stiff, and reserved, and haughty. We long to secure for cottages and cabins, not only the Christmas dole, but the kind words, and the friendly recognition, and the occasional call. We long to see toleration and fair play. We long to see industry and a competency convertible terms; and we long to see the laborious classes kindly affectioned one to another, and respectful of the rights and the feelings of their hard-working brethren. And on every side we long to see more magnanimity, more confidence, and more mutual forbearance.

But we have no faith in any social reform which overlooks the fact that man is a fallen being. Though we had never read it in the Bible, we think we could read it in

the world, that man is no longer what a holy Creator made him. *His heart is not right with God, nor is it right with his fellows.* And every ameliorating scheme which overlooks this two-fold depravity is sure to end in frustration.

For many ages the mechanical world laboured to create a perpetual motion. As soon as a man had learned a little algebra, or a little of the art of engine-making, he attacked this doughty problem. And you may have seen some of the quaint contrivances which resulted from these attempts: cylinders revolving to ever-falling weights within them, and polished balls descending a self-restoring incline. But as discovery advanced, it was found that all these efforts were based on a false assumption: that they forgot the force called FRICTION. And as it is now generally conceded that the discoverer of this sleepless mechanism will be the first man who annihilates the attraction of matter, perpetual motion is reserved for the amusement of those eccentric geniuses who are best kept from mischief by a perpetual puzzle, and is chiefly studied in such colleges as Hanwell and St. Luke's.

But the problem which has been abandoned in physics is now revived in the domain of ethics, and people ask, "How are we to create within the race a constant progress towards perfection? Taking man as he is, and taking such aids as he can himself supply, how are we to abolish misery, and make the earth a second Paradise?" And many solutions have been offered. The press teems with them. One day last summer we read the plan most popular. The brilliant writer proposes that the working

men of France should resolve themselves, or that Government should group them, into huge industrial families, for five francs apiece working eight hours a day, leaving it to each man's sense of honour how busily he shall labour, and requiring the clever and the diligent to support the stupid and the lazy. And when we read it, we said to ourselves, "Perpetual motion once more! This sanguine projector has overlooked friction. The scheme might answer with angelic operatives; but if tried in a world like ours, there are two things which will bring it to a speedy stand-still: the one is man's irreligion; the other is his selfishness. He would need to be a true philanthropist who would work with a steady eye to his neighbour's welfare; and he would need to be a God-fearing man who would persist to labour when he knew that, if he slept or played, his neighbours would labour for him." And, curiously enough, the same day brought an American paper of May 13, 1848, where, amongst other news, we read, "While Socialism is going up in Europe, it is going down in this country. The Northampton Association of Industry was abandoned, after having incurred a debt of 40,000 dollars, and Hopedale has relinquished the community principle, and goes upon the individual plan." And so must it ever be, till the two grand obstacles are done away. Till irreligion is exchanged for piety, and till selfishness is superseded by brotherly love, the world must proceed on the individual plan. And till then, Hopedale must count on many disappointments, and old Discord will resume his reign in the halls of each New Harmony.

Some people once built a bridge; but it was scarcely

erected when it tumbled down. They tried it a second time with no better success. And the third time they changed the plan, and took every precaution, and allowed a long interval for the mortar to harden; but no sooner had they removed the centerings than up sprang the key-stone, and in bulged the arches, and with a crash and a plunge the wholesale ruin poured into the tide below. On this, a council of practical men was convened. The architect came, armed with his plan so prettily drawn, which he flourished as on a field-day a marshal will flourish his bâton. And rival architects came, not so much to suggest, as to enjoy a little quiet exultation. But the man of skill, and the main hope of the conclave, was a civil engineer from the capital. For a long time he said nothing; but he had evidently scanned it all in a single glance, and it was clear that he was only tracing symbols in the dust with his cane, till the provincials had talked themselves out, and he should be summoned to pronounce his oracle. "Of course," was that oracle, "the span is too wide, and the ellipsis by far too eccentric." "Impossible!" cried the horrified architect; "the first plan had arches as round as the Roman, and it went like a house of cards." This by no means shook the judgment of the man of skill; but it emboldened a plain man, who once wrought as a mason in that country-side, but who had saved a little money, and was now doing business on his own behalf. "Truly, sirs, I wonder that you think of nothing but arches, and abutments, and spans. Just look at that brick;" and so saying, in his great hand he crushed a fragment as if it were touchwood or toadstool. "I never

knew a brick come from these fields which would bear the weight of its neighbours. It is not the fault of the plan; it is all the blame of the bricks." And it would be well if projectors in politics and morals adverted more to THE STRENGTH OF THEIR MATERIALS. Like bricks from the same kiln, some specimens of human nature may be better than others; but in building a social structure for Britain or the world, you must look, not to picked samples, but to the ordinary run. You must look, not to patriots, and saints, and the martyrs of favourite schemes; but you must look at your neighbours, and your shopmates, and the mass of your fellow-townsmen, and say if you are prepared to cast away all your present securities for peace and comfort, and fling yourself entirely on the honour of each and the charities of all. For if you distrust your neighbours as they are, no new arrangement into groups or ateliers, into phalanxes or cones, will make them trustworthy. A few bad bricks will spoil the finest arch; but the finest arch will not convert to marble or adamant blocks of untempered clay.

We love our fellow-men, and we long for their greater happiness; but so profoundly do we believe that "the imagination of man's heart is only evil," so persuaded are we that our world as yet contains little loyalty to God, and little love of man to man, that we have no faith in any self-restoring system. It is not a new construction which society needs, so much as new material. Nor can we promise ourselves a political millennium. Doubtless, it is the duty of every citizen to give efficiency to such good government as he enjoys; and it is the duty of every

state to aim at constitutional optimism; to seek such a code of laws, and such a distribution of power as will make it easiest for the citizens to do what is right, and most difficult to do what is wrong. But there is no magic in political change. No form of government, republican, representative, or despotic, can cure the real complaint of our species. No law can change vice into virtue, or give to guilt the joys of innocence. No ruler can make the Atheist happy, or kindle a blessed hope in that mephitic mind which has quenched its own lamp of immortality. When Hercules put on the poisoned robe, it did not matter where he went. No change of climate, no breezy height, no balmy sky could lull the venom in his fiery veins. Restless and roaming, he wandered to and fro, and raged at everything; but the real quarrel was with his tainted self, and the change which would have relieved his misery would have been a migration from his own writhing nerves and stounding bones. And let a man of idle or immoral habits, or let an ill-assorted family try all the constitutions in the world, or let a new constitution come to their own country once a year, and they will soon discover that to a guilty conscience or a dissolute character, political day-springs bring no healing. Legislation contains no charm—no spell for converting personal or domestic wretchedness into virtue and tranquillity; and so long as a man is entangled in his own corruption—so long as he wears the poisoned vest of inherent depravity, "he may change the place, but he cannot cheat the pain."

Is there, then, you will ask, no hope for society? Is the present routine of selfishness, oppression, and suffer-

ing to go on for ever? Assuredly not. But it will come to an end in no other way except that which God has designed and foretold. It will end when he Himself interposes. Till then, visionaries, amiable or atheistic, may each propound his panacea; but, alas! the plague of society is too virulent for any medicine native to our earth. And, no doubt, elaborate attempts will be made, and associations will be formed, with a view to counteract the dispersive elements in human nature. Influential leaders, poetical statesmen, and discarded projectors will say, "Go to, let us build us a city and a tower whose top may reach unto heaven, and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth;" but the feuds and the jargon which confounded the Plain of Shinar will prove fatal to Babel the Second. And it is not till the Prince of Peace shall commence His reign of righteousness, and, simultaneous with His enthronement, the Spirit of God shall mollify the minds of men, that "violence" shall vanish from our earth, and "wasting and destruction" from within its borders. And when that day comes—when by the direct interference of the Holy Spirit, man's enmity to God is converted into allegiance and love, and man's selfishness is drowned in kindness and goodwill, many of the results for which men at present sigh will no longer need perilous experiments, but will develop of their own accord. When the years are all a continuous Pentecost, and the world one Christian family, none will lack, and, if they please, people may then have "all things in common."[1] "For as the earth bringeth

[1] Acts ii. and iv.

forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth; so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations."

And, in the meanwhile, the reader may secure his own happiness without overturning an empire or new-moulding society. Like Caspar Rauchbilder, you run the risk of losing some solid and immediate advantages whilst musing on remote and wholesale reformations. The present state of society may be vicious; but in the most essential matters, your Creator has rendered you independent of society. By making you the custodier of your own soul, He has made you the keeper of your own comfort. And, if you be wise, you will go so far on the individual plan as to study the gospel, and seek the one thing needful for yourself. So far as you are concerned, that gospel is a personal message. To you and me, my brother, God offers a personal salvation. And if we believe that gospel, and live godly, righteous, and sober in the world, whatever be the state of society, we shall secure our personal happiness here and hereafter. Perhaps, too, we shall then be able to do something in order to mitigate the misery and increase the happiness of those around us.

VII.

FIRE-FLIES.

In the New World's warmer forests they find great numbers of a shining fly;[1] and so plentiful is their light that people often turn them to useful purposes. A friend of our own, when his ship lay anchored off the coast, had occasion to search for a book in the cabin overnight, and recollecting that two of these living lanterns were enclosed in a pill-box, with their aid he ran over the titles of the different volumes, till he found the one he wanted. The natives often keep a few in a phial, to guide them at little turns of household work; and as there is no danger of their causing combustion, travellers sometimes put one of these phials along with their watch, and under their pillow.

Of such tiny lights we now send the reader a specimen. It is not the object of these chapters to give a system of theology, but we should be glad if we could impart the A B C of Christianity; and in studying its early lessons our fire-flies may lend a little light. Thankful should we be if they proved of service to any one journeying in the dark, and perplexed about his road; or if they shed a ray, however feeble, on any sentence of God's own Word. And

[1] *Elater noctilucus*, a sort of beetle.

though grown people may despise them, we are not without the hope that, like the flying lamps in Chili, they may find favour with your boys and girls.

THE PILGRIMS AND THEIR PITCHERS.

It was long ago, and somewhere in the Eastern clime. The king came into the garden and called the children round him. He led them up to a sunny knoll and a leafy arbour on its summit. And when they had all sat down, he said, "You see far down the river, and hanging as on the side of the hill, yonder palace? It is a palace—though here it looks so little and far away. But when you reach it you will find it a larger and sweeter home than this: and when you come you will find that I have got there before you. And when you arrive at the gate, that they may know that you belong to me, and may let you in, here is what each of you must take with him." And he gave to each of the children a most beautiful alabaster jar —a little pitcher so exquisitely fashioned that you were almost afraid to touch it, so pure that you could see the daylight through it, and with delicate figures raised on its sides. "Take this, and carry it carefully. Walk steadily, and the journey will soon be over." But they had not gone far before they forgot. One was running carelessly and looking over his shoulder, when his foot stumbled, and as he fell full length on the stony path the pitcher was shivered in a thousand pieces; and one way and another, long, long before they reached the palace, they had broken all the pitchers. When this happened I may

mention what some of them did. Some grew sulky, and knowing that it was of no use to go forward without the token, they began to shatter the fragments still smaller. They dashed the broken shreds among the stones, and stamped them with their feet; and then they said, "Why trouble ourselves about this palace? It is far away, and here is a pleasant spot. We will just stay here and play." And so they began to play. Another could not play, but sat wringing his hands, and weeping bitterly. Another grew pale at first, but recovered his composure a little on observing that his pitcher was not broken so bad as some others. There were three or four large pieces, and these he put together as well as he could. It was a broken pitcher that could hold no water, but by a little care he could keep it together; and so he gathered courage, and began to walk along more cautiously.—Just then a voice accosted the weeping boy, and looking up he saw a very lovely form, with a sweet and pleasant countenance—such a countenance as is accustomed to be happy, though something for the present has made it sad. And in his hand he held just such a pitcher as the little boy had broken, only the workmanship was more exquisite, and the colours were as bright as the rainbow round the stranger's head. "You may have this," he said; "it is better than the one you have lost, and though it is not the same, they will know it at the gate." The little mourner could scarcely believe that it was really meant for him; but the kind looks of the stranger encouraged him. He held out his hand for the stranger's vase, and gave a sob of joyful surprise when he

found it his own. He began his journey again, and you would have liked to see how tenderly he carried his treasure, and how carefully he picked his steps, and how sometimes, when he gave another look at it, the tear would fill his eye, and he lifted up his happy thankful face to heaven.—The stranger made the same offer to the playing boys, but by this time they were so bent on their new amusements, that they did not care for it. Some saucy children said, he might lay his present down and leave it there if he liked, and they would take it when they wanted it. He passed away, and spoke to the boy who was carrying the broken pitcher. At first he would have denied that it was broken, but the traveller's clear glance had already seen it all; and so he told him, "You had better cast it away, and have this one in its stead." The boy would have been very glad to have this new one, but to throw away the relics of his own was what he could never think of. They were his chief dependence every time he thought of the journey's end; so he thanked the stranger, and clasped his fragments firmer. The boy with the gift-pitcher and this other reached the precincts of the palace about the same time. They stood for a little and looked on. They noticed some of the bright-robed inhabitants going out and in, and every time they passed the gate, they presented such a token as they themselves had once got from the king, but had broken so long ago. The boy who had accepted the kind stranger's present now went forward, and held it up; and whether it was the light glancing on it from the pearly gate, I cannot tell, but at that instant its owner thought that it had never looked so

fair. He who kept the gate seemed to think the same, for he gave a friendly smile, as much as to say, "I know who gave you that;" and immediately the door was lifted up and let the little pilgrim in. The boy with the broken pitcher now began to wish that his choice had been the same; but there was no help for it now. He adjusted the fragments as skilfully as he could, and trying to look courageous, carried them in both his hands. But he who kept the gate was not to be deceived. He shook his head, and there was that sorrow in his look which leaves no hope. The bearer of the broken pitcher still held fast his useless sherds, and lingered long. But no one took any notice of him, or felt the smallest pity for him; and though he made many efforts, every time he approached the door it seemed of itself to shut again.[1]

[1] Perhaps you will understand this story by laying the following texts together:—

"Without holiness no man shall see the Lord."—Heb. xii. 14.

"God made man upright."—Eccl. vii. 29.

"All have sinned and come short of the glory of God."—Rom. iii. 23.

"All the world is guilty before God. And by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight."—Rom. iii. 19, 20.

"But now THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD is manifested; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all and upon all them that believe. Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood."—Rom. iii. 21, 22, 24, 25.

"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God."—Rom. v. 1, 2.

"But they being ignorant of GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God."—Rom. x. 3.

THE ROYAL FEAST.

A certain king prepared a feast in honour of his dear and only son. And the first invitations he issued to the nobles of the land, and some ancient families who had been long in favour with the prince. But when the appointed hour arrived a sulky fit had seized them, and, as if by previous concert, scarcely one of them appeared. But, resolved that his munificence should not be lost, nor the honour intended for his son defeated, and as all the people there-around were equally his subjects, he said to his servants, "The feast is ready, but the guests are not come. Go into the streets and lanes, and bring in whomsoever you find." Forth went the servants, and great was the wonder when they announced their errand. A poor labourer was returning from his work, and having got no wages from his master, was trudging wearily home to his empty cupboard, when the king's messenger hailed him, and told him that a feast was prepared for him. After the first gaze of incredulity, finding that he carried this commission from his king, and was really in earnest, the poor labourer turned his steps towards the palace. The next was a cripple, who sat by the wayside begging. He had gathered little that day, when the messenger told him he would find a feast at the palace, and the king desired to see him. The lame man had heard that something remarkable was going on at the court, and that the king was giving an entertainment in honour of some special event in his son's history; and though he expected no more than a loaf of bread and a flagon of wine at the gate,

as he knew that the king was of a very sumptuous and gracious disposition, he did not hesitate, but raised himself on his crutches, got up, and hobbled away. Then the messenger came to a shady lane, down which a retired old gentleman lived on a small spot of ground of his own. The messenger had far more trouble with him. It was not so much that he questioned the message, or that he did not like the invitation, but that he was annoyed at its abruptness and his own want of preparedness. He asked if there were to be no more invitations issued next week, or if there were no possibility of postponing the visit till the following evening; for, considering his station in society, he would like to appear in his best, and could have been glad of a little leisure to get all things in order. "However," said the messenger, "you know the custom of our court—the king provides the robes of state—all things are ready, come away;" and as he posted on, the old householder thought that rather than run any risk, he had better go at once—though some noticed that as he passed along he occasionally eyed his thread-bare garments with a look that seemed to say, he could have put on better, had longer time been allowed him. Then at the palace it was interesting to see how the different parties acted. According to the custom of that country, and more especially after the magnificent manner of that king, each guest was furnished on his arrival with a gorgeous robe. They were all alike, exceeding rich and costly: and the moment he came up, one was handed to each new-comer, and he put it on, and passed in to the dazzling banquet-hall. Some awkward persons, who did

not know the usage of the place, and who had carried with them the mean notions which they learned among the highways and hedges, scrupled to receive these shining robes, and asked what price they must pay for them. And one individual was observed to come in with rather better attire than the rest, and when offered a robe of the king's providing, he politely declined it, and stepped forward into the state apartments. He was no sooner there than he rued his vanity—for his faded tinsel contrasted fearfully with the clothing of wrought gold in which the other guests were arrayed. However, instead of going back to get it changed, he awaited the issue. All things were ready; the folding-doors opened, and from chambers all-radiant with purest light, and redolent of sweetest odours, amidst a joyful train the king stepped in to see the company. A frown for a moment darkened his majestic brow as he espied the presumptuous guest, but the intruder that instant vanished; and, with a benignity which created in every soul such a joy as it had never felt before—with a look which conferred nobility wherever it alighted, and a smile that awakened immortality in every bosom—he bade them welcome to the ivory palace, and told them to forget their father's house and their poor original, for he meant to make them princes every one, and as there were many mansions in the house they should there abide for ever.[1]

[1] See Matt. xxii. 1-14; and Luke xiv. 15-24; and compare them with Isaiah xxv. 6, lv. 1-3; Phil. iii. 8, 9; Rev. iii. 17, 18.

THE BLASTED BOWER.

Thousands of years ago there lived a prince-philosopher. In his youth he was single-hearted and devout. He loved to pray, and the beautiful hymns which his father had written he delighted to sing, and he made some of his own as beautiful. And the Most High God loved this pious prince, and prospered him wonderfully. And as, harp in hand, he sat on one of the knolls of Zion, singing Jehovah's praise, there began to sprout and bourgeon from the soil sweet scents and brilliant blossoms; and as the psalm proceeded, the vines and creepers mounted and the tendrils took hold of one another, till they mantled overhead, and the minstrel sang in a nest of flowers. The young prince was very fond of this alcove, and spent in it many a sultry noon. But, by and bye, he began to love God less, and soon forgot Him altogether. He did not care to sing psalms and pray. And a bad wife taught him to worship her god. It was a gilded idol, shaped like a beautiful woman; and the silly man said his prayers to this image of gold. And at last he took the image into his beautiful bower. But no sooner had it entered than a shudder passed through the alcove, and every leaflet trembled. The jasmine breathed sickly, the rose folded up its petals, and the heart's-ease died. The prince was much mortified. He vowed that he would make the bower blossom again. So he took a costly urn, and filled it with a rare elixir—an infusion into which he had melted music and precious gems and daintiest delights, and poured the voluptuous draught around the roots. But

without effect. All continued bare and blighted. Then he filled the urn with conquest, and with the blood-red irrigation soaked the reeking soil. In vain. And last of all, he travelled far, and climbed a lofty steep in quest of a famous dew. And in his pilgrimage to the World-Top Mountain he amassed such knowledge as no mortal had ever gleaned before. He learned the entire of things, and spake of birds, and beasts, and fishes; and when he returned so wondrous wise his compatriots raised a shout with which the welkin vibrates still. And from the chalice he poured the hoarded draught,—the largest flood of fame ever wasted on weary land. But still there was nothing seen except the wiry trellis against the burning sky; and on his blasted bower the broken-hearted monarch wrote, "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity."

Years passed on, and visiting the spot, the soul of the prince was moved. It felt as if all his youth had been a balmy trance in this bower of blessedness, and as if he had tasted no real joy since then. And, observing beneath the withered canopy the crumbling stock of Ashtaroth, he seized the rotten pagod and hurled it far away. Then, sinking on the ground in a paroxysm of bitter grief, he cried, "My Father, my God, wert not thou the Guide of my youth?" His spirit relented. To the God of his early adoration he felt his early love returning, and soon sank into a sleep which ingenuous shame and godly sorrow pervaded. As he woke, the smell of a delicious flower startled a youthful memory; and, gazing upwards, roses of Sharon looked down through the lattice, whilst among

them, like pulses of Paradise, exquisite odours went and came. Heaven's window had opened whilst the penitent slept, and had sent a plenteous rain. And rising from the fragrant couch, as a conclusion of the whole matter, and as the business of his remaining days, Solomon wrote this inscription, "Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole of man."[1]

THE VOYAGE.

There was a man who owned a little ship, and carried on with it a pretty coasting trade. He used to creep from port to port, and bought or bartered such commodities as each supplied. And, being fond of knowledge and strange sights, he sometimes landed, and visited the interior, and noted down any curious thing he came upon.[2]

But being of a wistful and aspiring turn, he often longed to spread a bolder sail, and make some nobler land.[3] He had heard the rumour of brighter climes; a whisper of spicy forests and dazzling wings; a distant report of waters which mature the pearl, and rivers which run down gold.[4] But the rumour was vague, and stirred no effort; and so our merchantman still cruised about from one dingy port to another of the little island where he was born.

Till one day, talking to a friend, and lamenting his joyless life, his labour without profit, and his success without satisfaction; he was surprised to learn that his friend had long felt the same. Nay, more; he had been making inquiry,

[1] For the key, consult the Book of Ecclesiastes, and 1 Kings xi.
[2] Eccles. i. 16, 17. [3] Psalms lv. 6. [4] 1 Cor. ii. 9.

and had resolved on forsaking his present line of life. He had learned that the Lord of that Better Land was a most kind and generous Prince, and made all strangers welcome, provided that, ere setting out, they secured a passport, which was freely supplied to all who chose. And he had gained some information regarding the country itself. The exact distance he could not tell. Some had reached it in a few weeks, and others had been at sea for several years. But he had procured a chart in which the course was clearly marked, and the grand port of arrival set down. And, for his own part, he was sick of this wretched coast which yielded nothing except the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life; and he was determined to lose no time in setting sail for Immanuel's Land.

Delighted with the information, and furnished with the chart, our voyager also resolved to steer for this better country. And, like one into whom a mighty purpose has entered, there was great alacrity in his movements, and much energy in his preparations. He might sometimes be seen for hours bending over the chart, and familiarizing himself with its landmarks. And, in his anxiety to be well informed on the subject, he got the narratives of some distinguished mariners who had performed the voyage lately; but after reading several, he found that they all agreed in extolling the minuteness and fidelity of the chart; and always ended by saying, that whosoever took heed to his track, according to its markings, could never go wrong.[1]

[1] Psalms cxix. 9, 99.

At last he set sail. It was a bright and airy morning when his little vessel turned her head to sea. In the healthy flutter overhead he heard a promise of better things to come, and the thought, "Bound for the better land," put springs into his feet as he paced the exulting deck. The very clouds which scurried light and pure along the sky he hailed as friends and fellow-voyagers, for they, too, seemed to seek that brighter shore; and the faith and hope with which his whole nature swelled and thrilled at last melted into love and wonder, and, with uplifted hands he cried, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to His abundant mercy, hath begotten me to a lively hope—to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away;" and presently, on bended knees, he was pouring out the gratitude of his ravished heart to the glorious Lord of that Land.

He was getting clear of the roads when he noticed a lighthouse rising up from the water, and looking to the chart, he found that it was erected over the Demas Sands.[1] And just here a pilot-boat came alongside of him, bearing despatches from the shore. One was a letter reminding him of his engagement to grace with his presence a splendid rout which was to come off next day, and reminding him that it was partly in honour of himself that it was given, and they would all be so dull without him. And the other was a letter from a near relation, telling him, that if he persisted in this ridiculous course, although he had intended to make him his heir, he would alter his

[1] 2 Tim. iv. 10.

will, and cut him off with a shilling. But just at that moment the peace of God was so keeping his mind that neither message disturbed him. He remembered, "Be not conformed to the world. Love not the world, neither the things that be of the world;" and having written two brief, but decisive notes, he turned the vessel's head a point more to seaward, and cleared in safety the Demas Sands.

After this the breeze abated, and towards noon it was nearly calm. Our voyager was in high spirits at the moral victory which he had just achieved, and was now pretty sure that he had not only set out in the right direction, but that at this rate nothing could hinder him from landing aright. A little self-complacency sprang up in his mind, and he thought less about the kindness of Him who had invited him to the goodly realm than about his own luck or wisdom in actually going. And whilst he was thus musing, he wondered, but he rather thought the ship was standing still. There could be no doubt of it. The sails were still a little set, and breaths of air were still moving about; but the ship was fast and would not answer to the helm; and, looking over the side, he could see quite plainly the ridge of rock on which it had grounded. He was much amazed; for he had felt no shock nor jar, and had taken it as gently as if it had been a sunken cloud or a spell in the water. But there he was, fast and firm; and it was no use backing the sails, for he could not move, and, to make the matter worse, the tide was ebbing. Just then, he noticed a sail near hand, and signalled her. She proved to be carrying his old friend,

who had first suggested the idea of this voyage, and who himself had newly put to sea.

Voyager. Well, here's an ugly trap. Do you know what they call this horrid reef?

Friend. Self-confidence. There is not a worse shoal in all the passage.

V. Why then is there no light nor beacon over it?

F. There are these buoys. And what is the use of your sounding-line?[1]

V. But was not it curious that I should slide so softly on what you say is such a dangerous rock?

F. Well, it was just in the same way that the good ship "Galatia" was wrecked long ago. She had just parted with the best pilot who ever navigated those seas—the famous pilot, Paul; and the last glimpse he had of her she was running well. And when word was brought him that the hapless "Galatia" was fast aground of this treacherous reef, so strange and unaccountable did it seem, that he exclaimed, "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you?" But it is time you were thinking what to do; for, if rough weather find you here, you must go all to pieces.

V. And what shall I do?

F. Look yonder.

And, as directed, the voyager looked aloft. And, though it was bright day, there shone in the clear firmament a broad and silvery star. The mariner knew that it was the Star of Bethlehem; and, as he intently eyed it, he felt his pinnace lifted off the reef, and soon the sails began to

[1] Prov. xviii. 12; Rom. xi. 20; 2 Cor. xiii. 5.

bulge, and, in gladness of release, the vessel bounded on her way.[1]

Humbled by this mismanagement, the voyager after this consulted his chart more carefully, and steered more exactly according to its minute directions. Sometimes he sailed in sunshine, sometimes in shade. At times the currents were cross, or the gale was in the vessel's eye. And then again, the wind, blowing where it listeth, would lift him fast along, and as one bright billow handed him to another, a joyous ditty would carol from the deck. Occasionally, he had a convoy from another seeking the same port, and often without a consort he pursued his solitary way.

At last a storm arose. There was first a lull and a lurid calm. A dusky red, a bloody dimness curtained the horizon, and enclosed the ship within its thickening pall. There felt like sulphur in the air, and the breath grew short, and the strength gave way, as when some fearful thing is coming. And when the angry sun was set, and nothing sparkled in the blotted firmament, and deep was calling unto deep—the moaning signals, in which the spirits of desolation seem to ask, If all be ready? it flashed —again—again—again; and the welkin was fire, and the sea was foam; and, amid the splitting cracks, and the engulfing flame, and the rising hurricane, it felt as if the quivering skiff were a tiny morsel in Destruction's open jaws. "O my God, my soul is cast down within me. Deep calleth unto deep, at the noise of thy water-spouts; all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me." It was the hour of darkness, and of the Prince of the Power of

[1] Phil. iii. 3; iv. 13; Psalm cxxiv. 7.

the Air, and strange whispers hissed through the gloom or gurgled up from the weltering flood. One of them suggested, "Cast away the beginning of your confidence." Another murmured, "Curse God and die." One yelled, "Hell is but a fable, and Heaven a poet's dream." And the ghastliest of all was a reptile croak, "There is no God." And the poor benighted soul began to wonder if it could be on the right track that all this riot of horrors went on, and feared that he must have got into some fiendish by-path, and almost wished, rather than hear those blasphemous voices, that the deep would swallow him quick. But from the jaws of destruction he cried again, and his brief but piercing prayer was ever the same, "Lord, save —or I perish." And, through all the turmoil and din, that cry was heard; for what is yon pavilion of moving light—that sunny shrine which glides over the billows, and a glassy path spreads out before it? What is this presence from whose distant ray the phantoms of the pit have already retreated, and their foul accents died away? The Bright and Morning Star is already on board; and to the "Peace, be still," which he spoke, the obsequious storm and the crouching waves have given instant answer. "It is I; be not afraid;" and though still soaked in spray and cold with terror, the presence of his protector and deliverer restores the sinking soul. Assured that the Saviour himself has taken the helm, he drops into a tranquil slumber, and, when he wakes, his drenched garments are dry, and the monsoon is past, and those constant winds are entered which will always blow the self-same way till he reaches the haven where he fain would be.

And as he glances along on the gentle waters, he takes out his log-book, and enters a full account of the hurricane. "They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in the great waters; these see the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep. For he commandeth and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves thereof. They mount up to the heavens, they go down again to the depths; their soul is melted because of trouble. Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses. He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still. Then are they glad because they be quiet. O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men." And from that time forward he marks a happy change in the character of the voyage. There is more progress and less vicissitude. He has passed under deeper skies and got into steadier gales. And he has fewer adventures and perils to record. And he has a serene and prevailing hope of arriving safe at last. By and by, he begins to notice fragments of sea-weed, and crosses whole banks of them; but though they somewhat hinder the ship and make its way more cumbrous, he does not grudge them, for they tell that land is near. And to tell it still more clearly, by and by new shapes are seen—bright pinions and darting gems which have come from the hidden shore, and are going back again. And there it comes itself—the shore with its palm-trees waving and its snowy temple gleaming; and already he inhales the fresh and balmy odour from distant forests and unseen flowers:—when

some suspicious sail bounds towards him, some skulking corvette which prowls on its pirate outlook near the very harbour's mouth, and for a moment he marvels that such murderous robbers should be suffered to cruise along the very margin of Immanuel's Land. But a signal is made from shore, "Resist, and he will flee." And obedient to the timely signal, the ship puts on her fighting trim; and no sooner is the flag of defiance shaken out, than the dark sail veers about, and, as it sneaks away, a shout pursues it, "O Grave! where is thy victory? O Death! where is thy sting?" When the morrow dawned, it showed the anchor dropped and the canvas furled; but it was the Fair Haven of Immortality, and the voyager had got safe to land.

THE DILIGENCE.

A friend of ours received an invitation to visit an illustrious Prince in a foreign country. Our friend was considered a sincere and worthy man, but he had a sour and splenetic temper. In the stage which conveyed him there were some other passengers; but as they were strangers, he did not speak to them. One had a coat of a peculiar fashion, and he set him down for a fop. Another had a slight blemish on a face otherwise pleasing; but every time that our traveller turned that way, his eye was arrested by that scar. A third had a slight impediment in his speech; but though this, like the rest, was a little thing, our tourist held that nothing is a trifle in so serious a matter as looks and language. The strangers, however, seemed to be well acquainted with

one another; and from some casual expressions it appeared that they were all journeying to the same place. They failed to make any impression on their taciturn comrade; and admonished by his short answers, they were polite enough to let him alone. It began to rain; and as the large drops swept in on the passenger opposite, he wished to put up the glass: but his gruff neighbour demurred, and, rather than have any debate, the gentleman wrapped himself up in his cloak, and retiring into the corner, shunned the shower as well as he could. And so, stage after stage they journeyed; the three happy and at home with one another, the silent man moody and self-absorbed. At last the hills around the mansion came in sight, and then the enclosing wall, and then the swelling lawn studded with its noble trees, and, last of all, the towers and battlements of the castle itself began to appear. And now the passengers began to look sprightlier, and glanced out at the windows, as if they knew it all, and smiled to one another, and began to get things in readiness, as if they, too, meant to stop somewhere hereabouts. And so they did; for the moment the stage drew up at the castle-gate, they all got out, and it was evident, from the attendants in waiting, that they were distinguished visitors. Two of them were special friends of the Prince, and the one who had borne the pelting of the shower so patiently was his brother. Our sullen traveller felt exceedingly awkward, and almost wished to retain his place in the vehicle and pass on. But ascertaining who he was, and that he too was bound for their mansion, the Prince's brother introduced himself, and

exerted all his courtesy to supersede his apologies and restore his self-possession. By the time they reached the entrance-door, the poor man's confusion had somewhat subsided; but bitter were his self-reproaches, and vehement his protestations that, if he had another journey to perform, he would not be so haughty by the way, nor look so silly at the journey's end.

Moral.

Be not sectaries—be not recluses. Please every one his neighbour for his good. Put up the window when it rains on your fellow-passenger; and to do good and communicate do not forget. Fall not out with your Christian brethren by the way; and in order to avoid painful discoveries and explanations when this conveyance of the visible Church stands still, and the journey of life is over, put on no arrogant nor exclusive airs whilst you still are fellow-travellers.

VIII.

THE FAITHFUL SERVANT.

Dear Reader,—You are away from home. Perhaps it is not long since you left it, and still your fondest thoughts are there. When the house is quiet; when you can follow every footfall in the street, till it dies away round the corner; when the fire burns low, and every tick of the clock comes loud and earnest; or when you chance to wake up in the lonely night, your mind is sure to wander off to that loved dwelling. Where is it? Is it yon white house, with the mountain behind it, and the misty crags where the eagle screams, and the torrent thunders down, in the most ancient melody of old and tuneful Wales? Or is it far, far away in the Highlands? Is it thatched with broom and brackens, and does a peat-stack stand at the gable?—and out among the crows and the lapwings, does Donald wrap round him his plaid, and herd the dun cattle, till the corn is cut and the potato-harvest is gathered? Or is it an English cottage? With its little lozenge-panes does the casement unclose on hinges? and when opened, does a sweet air come in from roses, and honeysuckle, and mignonette? Is it on the edge of the common, where sober geese and gentle donkeys browse together? and near

the shaded pond, where the waggoner stops the team, and cools his horses' feet in the dusty summer? Or is it down the bushy lane, where, in harvest, blackberries and filberts ripen, and long threads of gossamer saunter about in the golden air? Or near the village church?—so near, that when you lay sick of the fever, you could hear the choir and the organ? Are there almshouses all in a row—six for old men, and six for old women? And when they marched to church on Sabbath mornings, how many did you count the girls in blue frocks and white mittens?—how many the boys in round caps tufted with orange tops? Oh, yes! it was a sweet place, where you were born and bred; and if your father and mother are still alive, I do not wonder that your heart is often there.

Besides, you say that you are not happy here. The house is grand, but it is strange. Nobody cares for you. No one cheers you with a kind look or a pleasant word; and if your loneliness should ever make you dull, your fellow-servants jeer you. And when you think of that sorrowful afternoon when you packed up your things, and your brother carried your box, and your father convoyed you as far as the mile-stone; and when you feel again the clasp of that dear old hand, and seem to hear the faltering voice, "God Almighty bless you!"—your heart is like to break, and you almost wish that there were no servants and no mistresses, and no need for poor girls leaving home to seek a place with strangers.

But dry that tear. We feel for you, so young and solitary, and we would fain say something which might comfort you. Read this letter carefully, and read it to the end,

Eighteen hundred years ago, the Son of God came down from heaven, and visited our world; and that visit of His is by far the most important event in our world's surprising story. With all the love of God, He came in all the gentleness and tenderness of man; and His errand was as kind as His nature. He came to save sinners. To purchase their pardon, He shed His blood on the cross of Calvary; and He is now gone back to heaven, a Prince and a Saviour, delighting to bestow repentance and the remission of sins. And He sends through the world His Bible and his Ministers, beseeching men to take the benefit of His most precious blood, and through these ministers, and that Bible, saying, "Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

Jesus went back to heaven; but He left behind Him his Apostles. These good men went everywhere preaching the gospel; and, as the Holy Spirit was with them, their success was wonderful. When they told the love of God in sending His dear Son, and the Saviour's love in dying, something fixed the people's ear, and the story moved their minds—fierce spirits melted, and flinty hearts flowed down; and from among the roughest of mankind the Redeemer drew disciples after him. And whether it was the soldier's barrack, or the noble's country seat—whether it was the city mansion, or the tanner's hut beside the shore—wherever the gospel entered, it brought holiness, and peace, and joy. But there was no class of persons to whom it was more welcome than to the servants of that time. Many of them were actual slaves. They had been torn away from their homes in the German forest or on the

hills of Britain, and were now in bondage to the haughty Roman. And those of them who worked for wages were often harshly treated and poorly paid. But God is no respecter of persons, and the gospel was as free to Onesimus as to his rich master Philemon, and brought the same blessings to Rhoda the housemaid as to Mary her mistress. The kindness of that gospel won the heart of many a servant. They threw away their idols—they gave up their sinful habits, and became the affectionate followers of that exalted Saviour who was once Himself "in the form of a servant." And as great numbers were admitted to the early Church, they became a special charge to the Church's ministers. Timothy and Titus preached so plainly, that the servants understood them; and when Paul and Peter wrote letters to their flocks, they usually put in a message to the servants. Their labour was not lost. Many of these converts became bright Christians. By their modesty, and diligence, and faithfulness, they commended the cause of Christ; and when times of persecution came, rather than deny their Lord they were ready to go to prison and to death, and in the early annals of your class they have left their martyr-names.

The Lord Jesus is gone back to heaven; but He desires that you too would become His disciple. He desires that you would come to Him to receive pardon for your sins, and to get a new and right nature. He desires that you would enter His household and become His servant for ever. And He offers to become to you the same gracious Saviour and the same Almighty Friend as He has been to the thousands of happy servants before you.

Believe the blessed Saviour, and your worst sorrows will be ended. Your earthly lot may be hard. Your work may be irksome, your wages small, your employer severe. Never mind; you have promotion in prospect. The poor people who come begging to the door often tell you, "We have seen better days;" but the Christian is one whose best days are "not seen as yet." Eye hath not seen what God has prepared for His people; and amid all your toils and privations will it not cheer you to think, "My better days are coming"?

And would it not be delightful to have always a good employer? Some have masters and mistresses whom there is no pleasure in serving. They are stiff and cold, and they feel no interest in you. Or they are coarse and bitter; they give their orders with a threat, and reward you with a frown. Or they are mean and suspicious; accusing you when innocent, and condemning you unheard. And you grudge to waste your strength on thankless toil. It hurts you to be treated like a felon or a foe; and you know not which is hardest—to be blamed when you have done no wrong, or to win no notice and no thanks when you have done your very best. But you must learn to look higher. Enter the service of the Lord Jesus, and whatsoever you do you will then "do heartily, as unto the Lord, and not unto men." Without leaving your present place you will then have a Master, wise, and kind, and worthy of your utmost efforts; and for His sake you will be "subject, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward." And so long as they ask you to do nothing sinful, whatever your earthly superiors enjoin, you

will do it thoroughly and cheerfully for the sake of your Master in heaven. As you pursue your lonely task, and ply your weary toil, you will hear His own voice saying, "Occupy till I come;" and the thought that He has put you there will convert the meanest station into a post of honour. Even trials you will hail as that discipline which His wisdom prescribes; and when nothing else could keep up your courage, it will be enough to think of the day when—forgiving all their faults, and only remembering their labours of love—He will say to every meek and persevering disciple, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

Besides, if you become the servant of the Lord Jesus, you will have an Almighty Friend to whom to go in all your fears and sorrows. One of your trials is your loneliness. You have no affectionate counsellor now like what you had at home. And you would be thankful for some one who would take a kind interest in your welfare, who would listen to your griefs, and who would help you to do what is right and to shun what is wrong. For that purpose there is no friend like the Saviour; none so wise, so powerful, so holy; and, what makes Him the very one you need, He is a Friend constantly at hand. You do not see Him, but He is ever present, and will hear you if you pray. Tell Him of your sins and temptations, and He will help you to overcome them. Tell Him of your troubles, and He will comfort you. Tell Him of your difficulties, and perhaps whilst you are yet speaking they will vanish and disappear. And though you may not have much opportunity for prayer, the Lord is very pitiful; and just

as he heard Nehemiah with the king's wine-cup in his hand, and answered the prayer which Eliezer offered as he knelt beside his master's camel, so, if you are really earnest, the Lord will hear the petition which you breathe to Him at any time and in any place. We lately read of a servant in Scotland, who could get no retirement in the house, but she used to pray silently as she went to the well for water; "and often," she said, "as I stood beside the well, the same condescending Redeemer, who manifested Himself to the poor woman at Jacob's well, revealed Himself to me." And do you take for the guide of your youth that Saviour, as merciful as He is almighty, and then you can never be friendless or forlorn. To all your cares and sorrows His ear will be ever open; and, whilst no danger nor distress can escape His watchful eye, through every stage of life and in every scene of action He will graciously uphold you by the Holy Spirit's comfort and control.

Dear reader, will you not from this time onward love and serve this Saviour? Will you not go to Him, and beg that He would receive a poor unworthy sinner, who has heard of His kindness, and who hopes in His mercy? Will you not intrust to Him the keeping of your soul, and the care of all your interests? And, as He most willingly receives you, so will not you humbly and diligently follow Him? And are you not saying already, "Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do? Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth."

Yes, and to you the Lord hath spoken. He who gave the Bible had a great care for servants; and to copy all

the passages especially suited to you would fill this paper. We hope you will search them out, and mark them when you find them, and read them often over. In the meanwhile, as a specimen, here are three. Listen to the voice of Jesus, and let the holy accents sink into your inmost soul:—

"Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eye-service, as men-pleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God: and whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ. But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons."[1]

"Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things; not answering again; not purloining, but showing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things. For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us, that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."[2]

"Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God

[1] Colossians iii. 22-25. [2] Titus ii. 9-14.

endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called; because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned to the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls."[1]

From these passages you see that your first duty is obedience. Of course, you must not tell lies, nor do anything wicked, to please your employer; but so long as you remain in his service, and so long as his commands do not contradict the commands of God, you must do whatever he bids you. And do it cheerfully: even if you would rather be doing something else, still "do it heartily; do it as to the Lord, and not to men." The beauty of obedience is its frankness. There was a youth to whom his father said, "Go, work in my vineyard to-day:" but he answered, crossly, "I will not." It was not that he was particularly lazy, nor that he had no love to his father; for on thinking better about it, he threw off his coat, and took up his tools, and when his father stepped into the vineyard by and by, the lad was at work like a hero. But it was a

[1] 1 Peter ii. 18-25.

great pity, that churlish answer; it left a pang in his parent's heart, and it was not till he had made it up with his father, that he felt quite right in his own. And if you would do your work with comfort, do it cheerfully, and do it instantly. Never "answer again;" and let it never be seen, by your sour or lowering countenance, that you are vexed at any order. The way to make it easy is to take it cheerfully; and the way to make masters and mistresses kind and considerate, is for servants to be hearty at their work, and cheerful in their compliance. But a very foolish plan is, first to sulk, and then to obey: it loses time, it loses credit, and it loses good situations.

We can scarcely lay too much stress upon temper; for few tempers are naturally good, and yours is exposed to many trials. Sometimes you are called away in the midst of your work, and the labour of an hour is lost. Or you are ordered to attend to some matter which does not belong to your department. Or fellow-servants play tricks on you, and instead of helping you, increase your trouble. Or you are obliged to sit late and rise early, and, out of sorts, and out of spirits, you grow morose and miserable. And, it must be confessed, that this is trying to flesh and blood; but, just on account of these trials you are the more bound to pray for a meek and quiet spirit. To its possessor it is not only an "ornament,"[1] but an unspeakable comfort. Even where no sharp answer is given, people do not like to hear doors slamming and fire-irons rattling, and porcelain smashing, and other signs of the storm down-stairs; but be they "froward" themselves, or

[1] 1 Peter iii. 4.

be they good and gentle, they like to see their attendants calm and courteous. They like that their door should be opened to their friends by one who wears a welcome in her smiling face, and they feel it a personal compliment, when every office is performed with mild alacrity and evident good-will. Even though they may not like your piety, they will prize your politeness, and by your civil and respectful demeanour you will adorn the religion you profess. And you will smooth your daily path, and perform life's journey more pleasantly. You have looked at a country cart; and when there was need of haste, it was a clumsy sight to see it lurching and hobbling along the road, and a harsh tune to listen to its screeching axle and jangling gear, till some projecting stone capsized it, and it spread from ditch to dike, a wreck of splintered deals and broken spars: and along the same road you have seen the chariot speeding, and as on liquid axle and jaunty springs it skimmed the track, and curtseyed over the clods and the stones, its flight was silent and steady, as if wings opened and shut from every wheel. So is it painful to see a fitful temper jolting and jarring along its rugged course, provoked at every hindrance, announcing its progress by perpetual discord, and finally upset by some little interruption, which a more elastic spirit would have lightly glided over. And a happy thing it is to see that wretched temper changed; and, as it revolves through daily duties, vaulting over annoyances and stumbling-blocks, and holding on its way with neither dust nor din. Ruth Clark, whose story you would do well to read, once had a violent temper; but after the grace of God had reached her, she

began to watch and pray against this proud spirit, and so entirely was it subdued, that "persons living constantly with her would never have suspected that she had formerly been its slave." And, however unruly your spirit at present is, if you strive constantly against it, and cry for help to the Lamb of God, He will give you the victory, and bless you with a spirit like His own, "gentle, meek, and mild."

Whatever be the place you hold, you cannot discharge its duties without good sense, as well as good health and good principle; but if already blessed with these mercies, there is nothing to hinder you from becoming a first-rate servant: and, whatever may be his calling in life, every Christian should be first-rate in his own department. In every calling, however, it needs pain and perseverance to reach perfection. It was by long practice, and after many lessons, that Sir Thomas Lawrence became a first-rate painter; and it was by great humility, and by taking hints from every one, that John Dalton became a first-rate chemist; and it is by like means that you are to become a first-rate servant. Be humble, and then you will be thankful for every hint. You will observe how older and more accomplished servants do their work, and you will try, and try again, till you can do it as well as they. And when your mistress or a friend is kind enough to explain any process, you will carefully attend, and not need to be told it again. And thus, step by step, you will get on, till you become so neat and orderly, that in all your little realm of rooms and cupboards, everything will find its proper place, and wear its tidiest look; so

accurate and punctual, that you will forget no messages, and will have all things ready at the minute; so dexterous and expert, that it will seem as if there were a charm in your finger-points, and as if every article you touched understood your meaning; so calm and self-possessed, that confusion will clear up, and disorder will arrange itself when you come in; so thoughtful and considerate, that you will find out employment for yourself, and attend to matters which, but for you, would be omitted: and when you have reached this degree of skill and experience, it will be no flattery to call you a first-rate servant.[1]

Try to do good in the place of your sojourn. When Mr. Fletcher of Madeley was tutor in a Shropshire family, he had some respect for religion, but he had not enough to make him religious. One Sabbath evening, a pious servant came into his study to make up the fire, and seeing him writing music, she said, with deep concern, "Oh, Sir! I am sorry to see you so employed on the Lord's day." And though very angry at the moment, after she went out, he put away the music, and never copied any

[1] Those who are anxious to improve will find many useful hints in *The Servants' Magazine*, a penny periodical published monthly by *The Female Aid Society*. This society has done much good, and it may be useful to mention here that it maintains a *Servants' Home and Registry* at 5 Millman Street, near Bedford Row, where respectable female servants are lodged, and assisted in finding situations, at a very moderate charge.

In the same neighbourhood, that is, at 22 New Ormond Street, is a school for training servants, maintained by the Hon. Mrs. Kinnaird and her friends. Including a branch at Brighton, 125 girls are at present attending it, who, but for its advantages, would never have been fit for respectable service. We mention it here partly to record the delight we have experienced in visiting it, and partly in the hope that it may suggest to some benevolent reader the establishment of similar institutions elsewhere.

more on the Sabbath. I am not sure, however, that reproof is the best way of doing good to superiors. A word modestly spoken, and by a person of tried consistency, may sometimes prove a word in season, but it is more likely to be resented as rudeness, and you may only irritate those whom you meant to reform. Far more effectual is the silent eloquence of a lowly, cheerful, and obliging piety; and if some have been repelled from the gospel by the preaching tone and arrogant air of servants who professed it, others have been won by the gainly demeanour of servants who adorned it. But try to do good to your fellow-servants. If you are enabled to live soberly, righteously, and godly; if they see you correct, and truthful, and devout, but if at the same time you are kind and affable, you will gain great influence over them; and by lending them books, or persuading them to come with you to the house of God, you may confer a lasting blessing on their souls. And if you have the charge of children, teach them texts and hymns, and speak to them affectionately about the Saviour, and tell them Bible stories, and warn them with solemn tenderness against lying, and pride, and quarrelling, and selfishness, and the other sins of childhood.

A young girl once went to a thoughtless family in the north of Ireland. She loved her Bible, but the young ladies on whom she waited laughed at her religion. She tried all she could to be attentive and useful to them; and to please her they sometimes let her read aloud a chapter when they had gone to bed. But by and by a dangerous sickness seized her. It was a fever, and her

young friends were not allowed to see her, but they heard how happy she was amidst all her sufferings. And after she had gone to Jesus, the two oldest remembered what she used to say whilst yet with them, and began to read the Bible for themselves, till they found peace in the same Saviour, and till at last religion spread through this once careless family. Happy maid! when she meets on high the endeared objects of her prayers, and this unhoped result of her gentle piety.

Will you permit me to add that few classes in modern society are so rich as domestic servants? You have no rent, no rates to pay; you need buy neither coals nor candles, nor food, nor (clothing excepted) any of those endless commodities which daily tax the householder, and, though your income is small, you yourself are rich, for you might easily save the half of it. Sad pity that so many squander on treats or useless trinkets the wages for which they work so hard! Would it not be nobler to do as some have done, and educate a nephew, or young brother? or do as others have done, and maintain in comfort an infirm or aged parent? And would it not be wiser to lay up a good foundation against the coming time, and, by putting aside a monthly or yearly sum, to build a bulwark betwixt yourself and future poverty? That shilling which you spent at the pastry-cook's would have bought a Bible for a heathen family. That crown which you lavished on the brooch or the bracelet would have bought a blanket for your poor old grandfather, and many a time would his palsied limbs have thanked you during those bitter nights. And those sovereigns and tens of

pounds which have melted away, you know not how, had the bank or the benefit fund[1] received them, with what a lightened look might you now survey those helpless years when you shall be able to work and earn no longer! What think you? Will you henceforth try the plan of frugality and self-denial? Will you try how little may suffice for your present self, and how much you can save for your aged and worn-out self? and how much you can spare for those dear ones who do not fare so well nor lodge so pleasantly as you? Will you just count up how much you have expended on the "lust of the eye, and the pride of life"? on dress, and vanity, and idle show? These fancies did you no service at the time, and they all have perished in the using. Be persuaded, now, to try the more excellent plan; and though you may find it hard at first to pass bright ribbons and silken bargains, there is a threefold pleasure which will soon requite you: the sweetness of self-denial, the comfort of having somewhat provided against evil days, and the luxury of doing good.

But you say that I am quite mistaken in supposing

[1] There is such a fund connected with the Servants' Benevolent Institution, 32 Sackville Street. Servants sometimes lend money to relatives commencing business, or to persons who offer them a tempting interest. Now, a tempting interest just means a terrible risk. It means that the borrower is so unlikely ever to return the loan, that people whose business it is to lend money cannot trust him; and therefore he is obliged to offer six and eight per cent. to servants, and widowed ladies, and people who know nothing of business, and are likely to take the bait. In regard to relations: it may often be kind and helpful to give them a present of money, but a loan is neither kind nor helpful. It is not kind, for you give it with the hope of getting it all again; and it is not helpful, for "easily gotten quickly goes;" and at the end of the year they will need it as much as ever. In *giving*, you only hope for gratitude, and are pretty sure to get it: in *lending*, people hope for both gratitude and repayment, and usually get neither.

you unhappy in your present place. The family in which Providence has cast your lot is kind and considerate. It is a family in which God is feared and worshipped, and you are encouraged to frequent His house, and sanctify His Sabbath. If so, determine that no whim nor misconduct of yours shall ever part you from God's people. Put forth your utmost efforts to win their confidence, and let cheerful industry be your daily thank-offering to Him who has so highly favoured you. And, though a Christian servant will not waste her master's property, whosoever that master be, it is a great comfort when you think that the food or fuel which you save, or the furniture of which you are so careful, is something husbanded for the poor, or for the Christian treasury. And, though a Christian servant will be active, and obliging, and orderly, whatever her employers are, she has another motive added, when she thinks that her civility, and neatness, and good sense are increasing the happiness of a Christian home. Melanchthon, the great Reformer, was not rich, but he loved to show hospitality, and he needed to buy books, and travel a great deal in the service of the Church, and he often said that he owed it all to the good management of his old and faithful servant, John of Sweden. And just as we have known pious servants, who, rather than leave a pious family, would have continued to serve for nothing, so we have also known Christian families who, rather than see a faithful servant homeless in her declining days, were glad to retain, as an old friend, the inmate whom they had first received beneath their roof as a servant—"not now a servant, but a mother, a sister beloved in the Lord."

IX.

THE TRUE DISCIPLE.

Ever since the world sinned and woke up to misery, there is one absentee whom all have agreed in deploring. Every age has asked tidings of her from the age that went before, and from the one which came after; and even the most indolent have put forth an effort, and have joined their neighbours in searching for this fugitive. Some have dived into the billowy main, and sought her in pearly grottoes and coral caves. And some have bored into the solid rock, and rummaged for her in the mountain roots. And some have risen to where the eagles poise, and have scanned in successive horizons the habitable surface; but all have got the same report, "Where is Happiness?" "Not in me," cries the leafy grove; "Nor in me," booms the sounding tide; "Nor in me," rumbles gaunt and hollow from the dusky mine. And failing to detect her in life's bypaths and open ways, her votaries have reared decoys or shrines into which she haply might turn aside. But all of them have failed entirely. Theatres, dancing-saloons, gin-palaces, racing-booths—there is no authentic instance that she ever entered one of them. And though some have fancied that they glimpsed her—"Yes, yes," they whisper, "yonder she passed; and in that hall of

science, in that temple of knowledge, in that sweet home, you'll find her;" by the time you reached it, there was a death's-head at the door, and a "Mene Tekel" on the wall. "Not in me," sighed vain philosophy; and "Not in me," re-echoed the worldling's rifled home.

But where is Happiness? Man knows that she is not dead but disappeared; and ever since under the Forbidden Tree he ate the bitter-sweet and startled her away, he has longed to find that other and enlightening fruit which would reveal her to his eyes again. And this is the boon which the world's teachers have undertaken to supply. They have come from time to time, seers and sages, Thales, Pythagoras, Zoroaster, Epicurus, Con-fu-tze, and to Humanity's wondering gaze they have held up apples, as they said, fresh gathered from the Tree of Life. But after rushing and jostling round them, and getting at great cost a prize, these all proved naught to the hungry buyer. The golden apples were mere make-believes; hollow rinds, painted shells filled up with trash or trifles. Some ate, and still their soul had appetite; others ate, and were poisoned.

At last, along the path which a hundred prophecies had carved and smoothed, "the Desire of all nations"—the Son of God—appeared. And from the paradise above He fetched the long-lost secret. Himself "the Truth;" His every sentence freighted with majesty, and fragrant with heaven's sanctity; it needed not the frequent miracle to compel the exclamation, "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God." He did not reason; He revealed. His sayings were not the conjectures of keen

sagacity, nor even the recollections of an angel visitor, but they were authoritative words—the insight of Omniscience, the oracle of Incarnate Deity. And giving freely to all comers the "apples of gold" from His "basket of silver," the dim and the famished ate, and with open eyes looking up, in Himself they recognised the answer to the ancient query. "What is Happiness?" "Come unto me," is the Saviour's reply; "come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls." "Where is Happiness?" Here, at the feet of Immanuel. And then, and since, thousands have verified the saying. In the words of Jesus they have discovered the boon for which their understandings longed—conclusive and soul-filling knowledge; and in His person and work they have found the good for which their conscience craved—a saving and sanctifying Power.

To the great question, What is Happiness? Jesus is the embodied answer—at once the teacher and the lesson. The question had been asked for ages, and some hundred solutions had been proposed. And in the outset of His ministry the Saviour took it up, and gave the final answer. What is Happiness? "Happy are the humble. Happy are the contrite. Happy are the meek. Happy are they who hunger after righteousness. Happy are the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, the men persecuted for righteousness."[1] In other words, He declared that

[1] The reader could not do better than go carefully over the Sermon on the Mount. He will find it in the fifth, sixth, and seventh chapters of Matthew. We have known of repeated instances where persons received their first pre-

Happiness is Goodness. A holy nature is a happy one. But was not that a blank and confounding announcement? To tell the wicked people all around Him—the fierce, and quarrelsome, and licentious spirits who thronged the mountain side, "Blessed are the merciful, the pure, the peaceful;" was not that to place a gravestone on their hopes? Was it not saying to His auditors, "Happiness is goodness, and so it never can be yours?" And had the teaching of Jesus ended there, He would have left mankind in gloomy possession of a glorious truth; He would have left it a wiser but a sadder world. But in the minds of such as felt themselves guilty and unholy, that announcement raised two other questions. Will God pardon the past? And if He should, how are we to get those holy dispositions which are so essential to blessedness? And at sundry times, and in divers places, He answered both these questions. "Will God pardon the past?" "Yes;

possession for Christianity from that matchless effusion of Incarnate Goodness. The following passage occurs in Sir James Mackintosh's Indian Journal: "I have just glanced over Jeremy Taylor on the Beatitudes. The selection is made in the most sublime spirit of virtue. Of their transcendent excellence I can find no words to express my admiration and reverence. 'Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.' 'Put on, my beloved, *as the elect of God*, bowels of mercy.' At last the Divine speaker rises to the summit of moral sublimity. 'Blessed are they who are persecuted for righteousness' sake.' For a moment, O teacher blessed, I taste the unspeakable delight of feeling myself to be better. I feel, as in the days of my youth, that hunger and thirst after righteousness, which long habits of infirmity, and the low concerns of the world, have contributed to extinguish."—*Life*, ii. 125. At the moment when he wrote these words, we fear that this fine intellect was sceptical. It was far otherwise at last. His daughter says, telling of his latter hours, "I said to him, 'Jesus Christ loves you;' he answered slowly, and pausing between each word, 'Jesus Christ—love—the same thing.' He uttered these last words with a most sweet smile. After a long silence, he said, 'I believe—' We said, in a voice of inquiry, 'In God?' He answered, 'In Jesus.' He spoke but once more after this. Upon our inquiry how he felt, he said he was 'happy.'"

for God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." That is, "Accept my atonement, and you shall not die for your own sin. Employ me as your Mediator, and eternal life is your own. Believe and be forgiven." Again: "Supposing sin is pardoned, how are holy dispositions to be created and fostered in this wicked heart of mine?" "Jesus stood and cried, If any man thirst (for holiness), let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water. This spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive." That is, "Come to me as disciples, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. Believe on me, and find pure water welling through your nature's bitter soil. Believe, and be filled with holy desires and dispositions." So that, in its entireness, Christ's doctrine came to this—"A new and holy nature is blessedness. Believe in me, and your nature will be new and holy, and you yourself be blessed."

We have said that Christ was not only the great Teacher, but the great Lesson. Perhaps this will be plainer if we take another grand question. The world asks, What is Happiness? But that can only be answered by meeting another inquiry, What is God? Is He just, and good, and true? And how is He disposed towards sinners of our race? Is He placable? Is He propitious? Or is He stern and vindictive, and determined to destroy us? Or is He altogether indifferent to our weal or woe? Amongst thoughtful men these queries had been often mooted, and, doubtless, the first disciples of Jesus

had often mused and pondered over them; and, at last, when He was about to leave them, one put the question express. Their Master had told them that the time was come, and that He must now return to the Father; and feeling that the opportunity must not be lost, Philip exclaimed, "Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us." "That is the very thing for which our hearts are breaking: we know not the Living God. Show us the Father, and fill the great gap in our knowledge—the mighty chasm in our comfort." And Jesus answered, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip! HE THAT HATH SEEN ME, HATH SEEN THE FATHER." As much as if He had said, "Our nature is identical; our will is one. All that you need ever know of God is manifest in me. You wonder if God is holy, and just, and true. Have you not seen me? You wonder if God is kind, and good, and loving. Have I been so long time with you, and yet have you not known me? You wonder if God be gracious, and ready to forgive. Did I scruple in receiving you?"—And so, my dear friends, it is life eternal to know the only true God; and you will know Him if you know Jesus, whom He has sent. The Son is the express image of the Father; and if you would have confidence toward God, you must take the Lord Jesus as your Theology. Do not think that the Father is less compassionate, less condescending, less forgiving than the Son. Do not think of Him as less mindful of you, or less loving. Do not think of Him as less willing for your salvation than the Redeemer who died on Calvary; or less ready to hear and answer prayer than that Intercessor in whose name

your prayers ascend. He that hath seen the Son hath seen the Father; and if you would escape false terror, and ignorant surmisings, and idolatrous illusions, think of Jesus when you think of God.

In order to be truly happy, you must have some sufficient end in living. And this, again, has moved much controversy. What is the object to which an immortal nature may devote itself most worthily? Which is the highest good? And some have answered, TRUTH. They have consecrated their days and nights to learning, and have lived and laboured for the True. And others have maintained that the very crown of excellence is BEAUTY; and in painting, or verse, or music, they have yearned and struggled towards their fair and ever-soaring Ideal. And others, averring that GOODNESS is the truest joy—that moral rectitude is the topmost apex and converging goal to which all intelligence should tend and travel; they have resolved to spend and be spent for this, and have lived and died the devotees of Virtue. But if you, my friends, understand the gospel, you have found the true philosophy; if you know Christ, you have learned the SUPREME FELICITY. In the Alpha and Omega—in the all-inclusive excellence—in Immanuel, you possess at once the good, the true, the beautiful: the good, for He is the Holy One of God: the true, for He is the Amen—the truth-speaking and truth-embodying I AM: the beautiful, for—Himself the perfection of beauty—to a certain vision of His infinite mind His Omnipotence said, "Let it be," and in this fair universe you behold the result. Yes, it is a blessed thing to have a life rightly directed and worthily

bestowed; not to live for a phantom, but for something real; not to live for something insufficient or subordinate, but for a high and glorious end; not to live for something alien or irrelevant, but for an object which claims and can requite your service. Live to Christ, and then you live to highest purpose. Live to Christ, and then you live to Him who loved you, and gave Himself for you. Live to Christ, and then you have a patron, beneath whose smile you may dive into the deepest truth, and soar into the highest beauty. Live to Christ, and then you have an Almighty Friend, into whose arms you may consign your worldly calling and your dearest friends; and, after He has "put his hands upon them and blessed them," may receive them back, no longer stolen joys, but hallowed loans, and mercies bright with a Redeemer's benison. Live to Christ, and then your soul is joined to that fountain of unfailing strength, which gives at once the zest and power of goodness. If you would serve your family, your country, your friends, live to Jesus Christ. If you would have your existence raised to its highest level, and your faculties drawn forth to their fullest exercise, with you let it "to live" be "Christ." And if you would begin betimes that devout and benignant life, which Heaven prolongs and perfects, learn from Jesus how to live.

For it is in the living Saviour that we must learn the great life-lesson. Jesus was Divine, but He was also human. He dwelt amongst us not only to show us what God is, but what we should be. He left to His people an example that they should follow His steps; and the best idea of a Christian is "one in whom the life of Jesus is

once more manifest." We greatly needed such a pattern. We did not want so much one who should give us new rules and directions how to live, as one who should himself be a noble specimen. And Jesus was that specimen. In books, and especially in the inspired writings, holy character had been minutely described, and the rule of conduct had been carefully laid down. But what others taught, Jesus did and Jesus was. Before His appearing, too, there had been some splendid instances of isolated excellence—virtues blazing by ones and twos from dark and defective natures; but re-absorbing into His illustrious excellence all these scattered beams, the character of Jesus exhibited no defect nor dimness. Without a spot He shone, the Sun of Righteousness; without eclipse or obscuration, "the Light of the World"—a living decalogue, where each command was inscribed in letters of brightness on tablets of love.

Behold Him—how devout! There was one thing which made the man of sorrows still the man of joys. He could not lose the sense of the Father's love. There spread constantly around Him that melodious baptism which first issued from the excellent glory, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." In the strength of this assurance, He journeyed day by day, and found it meat and drink to do His Father's will. And when the toilsome day was done, and He pensively eyed the fox leaving his lair and the bird wending home to her eyrie, though His worn body knew no couch, His happy spirit sought its home in the bosom of its God. The Father loved Him, and that love was the rod and staff of the pilgrim Messiah.

It led Him in the paths of righteousness, and comforted Him in the valley of death-shadow; and as soon as in His darkest night He waved its transforming wand, Gethsemane lit up green pasture, and Kedron spread out still water.

And so, dear reader, do you enter into the Saviour's joy. In becoming His disciple, He says, "My peace I give unto you." That same peace which was His constant portion here below, He bought for sinners with His blood. And nothing can you do to the Redeemer more joyful, and to the Father more glorifying, and to your own soul more hallowing, than when in the Surety's name you claim the peace of God. Love Jesus, and the Father himself will love you; and instead of skulking through life a culprit or a convict, "accepted in the Beloved" you may lift up the eye of a dear and trustful child. If you would have your affections fixed to God, the cord of His own love must fasten them. If you would be strong for work or trial, the joy of the Lord must be your strength. If you would possess a deep and genuine holiness, the very God of peace must be your sanctifier. And if, when times are dark,—when the world looks gloomy, or shadows from the sepulchre are creeping round you,—if you would still have brightness on your onward path, learn to look up to God in Christ as your own God for ever and for ever.

And see Him—so pure of purpose. Placed before you is a casket of gold, and you are asked to guess what it contains; and looking at its exquisite tracery and costly material, you think of a blazing diamond or a monarch's signet-ring. Guess? You cannot guess. They open it,

and reveal a spider, a scorpion, or a spinning-worm! And surveying a human soul, you view the finest casket in this world. Made on a heavenly pattern, with powers so capacious, and feelings so susceptible, in order to be worthily occupied, it would need to be filled with some lofty purpose, some pure and noble motive. My reader, you have got that casket. What have you put in it? What is the thing which chiefly occupies your thoughts? Your great pursuit and pleasure? What impels you to exertion? Is it money? Is it popularity and praise? Is it dress? Is it dainty food? Is it some fierce and evil passion? Is it envy? Is it resentment? Is it selfishness? Is it the wish to achieve your own personal ease and comfort? Is it something so paltry that you are ashamed to call it the business of life?—something so baleful that it degrades and destroys the heart which hides it? Viewed in His worldward aspect, the Saviour's one motive was philanthropy. His life-long business was to do good to the bodies and the souls of those around Him. To pluck brands from the burning, to instruct the ignorant, to reclaim the vicious, to restore the fallen, to convert the soul, to lighten the burden of woe, to heal disease, to banish misery, to bind up the broken heart,—this was His daily calling, this was His continuous pursuit. "I must do cures to-day and to-morrow, and the third day I shall be glorified." Nicodemus did not come so late but that He was glad to see him, and the Samaritan woman did not find Him so exhausted, but the salvation of her soul made Him forgetful of fatigue. And so pure was this passion, so irrespective of accidental circumstances, or of the present

attractiveness of its objects, that the leper and the lunatic, the blind beggar and the howling demoniac, Malchus in the act of arresting Him, and the very men who slew Him, all came in for an ungrudging share. His last prayer was intercession; His last business was beneficence. "Father, forgive them;" "Woman, behold thy son; Disciple, behold thy mother;" and having prayed for His murderers, and provided for Mary a home, from the contiguous cross He bore with Him to Paradise, as love's last trophy, the spirit of the ransomed thief.

Reader, let the mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus. Seek to have your bosom filled with pure kindness and holy compassion—a compassion various as is human sorrow—a kindness which shall still be flowing whilst life itself is ebbing. Cease to be selfish. Learn the blessedness of doing good. Even you can contribute to that great work—the making of a bad world better. Is there no acquaintance over whom you have influence? None whom you might reclaim from a bad habit? None whom you might induce to read some useful book, or attend the house of God? Are there no poor children whom you might collect on a Sabbath afternoon, and teach them a Bible lesson? Is there no sick neighbour to whom you might carry a little comfort,—something nice to tempt his listless palate? No invalid friend whom you might cheer with an hour of your company, or to whom you might read or say something for the good of his soul? At all events, you can be doing good at home. You can minister to the wants of some aged parent. You can soothe the grief of some bereaved relation. You can

lend a helping hand, and lighten their labours who have got too much to do. With a firm but fatherly control, you can guide your children in Wisdom's ways. And you can diffuse throughout your dwelling that sweetest music—cheerful and approving words; that brightest light—the clear shining of a cordial countenance. And when God in His Providence sends favourable opportunities, with self-denial and prayerful affection, you may be the means of stamping on some immortal mind a truth or lesson as enduring as that mind itself.

Then, too, observe how simple and how genuine was His character! how free from extremeness or reserve! "The Son of Man came eating and drinking." He wore the common dress of the country. He spoke the common language. So far as they were innocent, He fell in with all the common usages of the people around Him. And some were annoyed at this. They wished that He would make Himself singular. They would have liked Him to keep more aloof. Like His predecessor, John the Baptist, they would have preferred that He dwelt in the desert, and fasted, and wore a hairy mantle or some peculiar garb. They could have wished to see Him issue on the world from some dim cloister, and in stately speech give forth His mystic oracle, and once more vanish from the view. But they fancied that they knew all about Him—His birthplace, His parentage, His habits; and so long as He lived this open and explicit life they could not surround Him with an odour of sanctity. They were too gross to perceive how much of Heaven He carried into Cana's feast, and with what a God-like purpose He went

to be the guest of Matthew or Zaccheus. They forgot how much nobler is the piety which hallows common life, than the demureness which flies away from it. And they did not know that He was doing all this on purpose. He meant His example to be a pattern to common people, and therefore He frequented the ordinary resorts, and lived the familiar life of men. But though He might now be seen in the market-place or under the temple-piazza, surrounded with people from the shops and stalls; and though you might this afternoon meet Him amidst lawyers and courtiers, in the house of Simon the Pharisee; and though you might overtake Him next morning seated under a way-side tree, and discoursing freely to His peasant followers; and though on all these occasions there was no assumption, no reserve, no artifice, there was, at the same time, no weakness, no sanction to vice or folly. There was all the refinement of a most delicate benevolence, and all the majesty of a nature separate from sin. His every movement was innocence; His every utterance was purity. His character was like the sunbeam, visiting without degradation the poorest hovel, and contracting no stain from the evils which it failed to dispel.

Reader, you are living in that world in which the Lord Jesus chose for a season to reside. If your piety be sound and strong enough, common life will not make you carnal. Have grace in your heart. Live under the eye of God. Live in the name of Jesus. Take your Master for your model. Pray and labour to be in the world as its sinless Visitor was. And if God should give you the spirit of true discipleship, there will be a beautiful completeness

in your character. You will not need to study your appearance, nor to be nervous about people's opinions; for by its self-sustaining sincerity, your conduct will sooner or later achieve its own vindication, and in her child shall Wisdom be justified. In your common talk there will be no scurrility nor scandal; nothing false, nothing unseemly, nothing base nor vile. In your ordinary acting, there will be no crooks nor crotchets; nothing shabby or unfair; nothing cruel or oppressive; nothing for which conscience cannot render a good reason. But those who knelt with you at family prayer will recognise the same man when they meet you in the mart or the workroom; and those who last saw you in the festive circle will not be startled when they find themselves beside you at the communion-table.

From what has been said, you will perceive that it is to three things that the mission of Jesus Christ owes its main importance:—

He is the manifestation of God.

He is the Mediator betwixt God and Man.

And He is the model to His redeemed and regenerate people.

He is God manifest. No man hath seen the Father but the Son, and he to whom the Son hath revealed Him. He that hath seen Jesus hath seen the Father. He is the express image of the Father; and as embodying all the perfections and dispositions of the invisible Godhead, Jesus is to our race the one Theology.

He is also Mediator. His cross is the meeting-place

betwixt God and the sinner. His blood is the sacrifice which makes it a righteous thing in God to cancel guilt and receive the returning transgressor. His gospel is the white flag, the truce-proclaiming banner which announces Jehovah's amnesty, and says to every rebel, Be reconciled to a reconciling God. His merit is the censer which perfumes the sinner's prayer, and makes it prevalent with a holy God. His intercession is that secret influence within the veil which secures for His Church and its believing members the gift of the Holy Ghost. His love is the balm of life; His presence the antidote of death; His glory seen and shared the joy of heaven. So that as the source and consummation of all our greatest blessings, Jesus is the Supreme Felicity.

And He is the pattern of His believing people. All that was human in His earthly walk is for our example, that we should follow His steps. And with such a transforming agent promised as is the Holy Ghost, and with such a pattern propounded as the perfect Saviour, there is no limit to the excellence, inward and outward, after which the followers of Jesus should aspire. To be "like Him" is the privilege of a perfect world; but how gloriously near to that likeness even now His loving people may attain, the Bible nowhere limits. But the believer whose character is strong without hardness, and gentle without weakness—who is consumed with the zeal of God, and who still glows with good-will to man—who is spiritual but not sanctimonious, diligent and withal devout, vigorous in action and patient in endurance, that consistent disciple bears the visible lineaments of the Elder Brother.

And as supplying our world with the first and only instance of excellence fully developed and perfectly proportioned—goodness in its entireness, and each grace in its intensity—the life of Jesus is the great Text-book of Ethics—the grand lesson in Practical Piety.

You also perceive that Christianity, or the knowledge of Christ, is "the most excellent of all the sciences." Some knowledge is entertaining, and some is useful; but this knowledge is essential. Without it you cannot gain peace of conscience, nor that refinement and elevation of character which itself is happiness; and without it you cannot secure a blissful immortality. And of all the sciences which treat the great question of human happiness, this alone is solid; for this alone is constructed from facts, and confirmed by experience. Some theories are popular from age to age, but they are human compilations, and like snow-statues reared in spring, the influence is already working which will melt them again. And other theories gleam before the fancy passing fair, and as they cannot be caught they can neither be confuted nor confirmed. Like the aurora they flicker and amuse, but they cannot be employed for practical purposes; you cannot collect and retain them to light your chamber or your streets. But Christianity is as practical as it is sublime, and whilst it has truths which surpass the loftiest intellect, it has applications which suit the lowliest purposes. And it has a distinction peculiar to itself, one which should recommend it now, even as it will endear it on a dying day; it is the only REVELATION. God was in it at the first; God is in it still. Hearkening to other teachers you

may learn truth and falsehood together; but sitting at the feet of Jesus you can learn no error there. Listening to His words you hear the voice of God, and nothing will need to be unlearned in eternity which you have once acquired from Him.

In the old schools of philosophy it was usual for the pupils to bring a present to their teacher at the commencement of each term. And on one of these occasions, when his disciples, one by one, were going up with their gifts to Socrates, a poor youth hung back, and there was something like a blush upon his cheek, and something like a tear in his eye, for silver and gold he had none. But when all the rest had gone forward and presented their offering, he flung himself at the feet of the sage, and cried, "O Socrates, I give thee myself." And this is the offering which the Lord Jesus asks of you. Give Him yourself. Rise, take up the cross, and follow Him. In modesty and affection become His disciple, and He will not only make you welcome to His lessons, but He will make you a sharer in His heavenly life. He will give you the Holy Spirit. That Divine enlightener will open your understanding to receive the Saviour's doctrine, and will fill your soul with truth's vitality. And do not despond because of what you at present are. "This man receiveth sinners;" and in receiving you He will make you a "new creature." Arise, He calleth you. Become His disciple, and, like John, imbibing sanctity from the bosom where he laid his listening ear; like Thomas, lingering near His person, but carrying in his heart a stony doubt, a stubborn misgiving, till, in the flash of overwhelming evidence, that doubt, that mis-

giving was fused into faith and weeping wonder; like Paul, who, in every pulse of his intensified existence, felt the life of Jesus throb, and who, next to the desire of being with Him, burned with ardour to be like Him: however scanty your present knowledge, you will learn in proportion as you love; however many your present doubts, they will all be drowned in adoration and astonishment, whilst you can only cry, "My Lord, and my God!" and however defective your present character, there will be kindled in your soul a hope and an effort—the hope that when He appears you shall be like Him, the effort to purify yourself as Christ is pure.

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